

*None Like It*



A PLEA FOR THE OLD SWORD

JOSEPH PARKER

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NONE LIKE IT.





# NONE LIKE IT

A PLEA FOR THE OLD SWORD

BY

JOSEPH PARKER

AUTHOR OF

“ECCE DEUS,” “THE PEOPLE’S BIBLE,” ETC.

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“And David said, Give me that: there is none like it”

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## PREFACE.

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THIS book has been written almost wholly from a preacher's point of view. In these days the position of the preacher is often one of embarrassment, because he cannot fail to be aware that the Book out of which he takes his texts is regarded, probably by some of his own hearers, as at best but partially and intermittently inspired. The first thing the preacher has to do is to establish the inspiration of his text, or, against the will of his more critical hearers, to take it for granted. If preacher and hearer are disagreed as to the inspiration of the text, and the consequent authority of the text, the cleavage cannot but have a disastrous effect upon the sermon. The sermon may, indeed, not be lacking in good things, it may even be instructive and interesting; yet, de-

giving no authority from the text, it starts with the initial difficulty of claiming faith upon the pretenses of an invalid certificate. In view of such a possibility it might be well to consider whether the text is not a snare and a disadvantage.

In maintaining the inspiration and authority of the Bible—and in deliberately and gratefully describing it as the Word of God—I have not overlooked the claim which has been set up for present-day inspiration, quite as direct and effective as the inspiration of the prophets and apostles. I regard such a claim with extreme suspicion, for reasons fully stated in the book. If present-day inspiration, of a prophetic and apostolic kind, is possible, and is, indeed, actual, why so vehement an appreciation of the inspired parts of the Bible? If inspiration is a commonplace in spiritual experience, if we always had it, if we have it now in greater measure than the Church ever had it before, why make so much of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the disciple John and the apostle Paul? Why this adoration of ancient names? Why go to them for texts when we can have both texts and sermons as directly from above as we had this morning's

dawn or yesterday's refreshing rain? Respect for antiquity may be pleaded, or reverence for the continuance of inspiration, but the plea does not rise above the level of pious and chastened sentiment; certainly it strikes no note of authority, and certainly whatever it may do indirectly for the sustenance of independent faith, it can inflict no just rebuke upon independent doubt or unbelief. If John and Paul only had what we may have, why take texts from them instead of taking them from ourselves? We cannot first deprive the apostles of uniqueness and then clothe them with authority. Where there is no authority there can be no appeal. Where the authority is upon a level with our own, why not fix the responsibility upon our own inspiration instead of citing texts and doctrines propounded by men who are not here to be cross-examined and tested? Men ought to have the courage of their inspiration. Has history magnified any inspiration that did not involve contempt, loss, reproach, expulsion, and crucifixion? Did inspiration of an apostolic sort ever fit itself into a popular and highly honored position? Inspiration is always proved on Golgotha. It is not an ornament: it is a sacrifice.

It is strongly asserted that inspiration does not guarantee historical accuracy. This is indeed a bold assertion; from my point of view wholly incredible, and especially incredible in reference to the New Testament. But the point cannot be argued in a prefatory explanation. Enough to say that infinite division, exasperation, bigotry, and heart-burning—the unhappy experience of many centuries—would have been saved if in one pregnant sentence the Church had been warned by the Revealing and Inspiring Spirit that the truth of the Bible was interspersed in a mass of historical impossibility, misstatement, and postdated interpolation. That no such warning is given is a fact which has with me the force of an argument.

JOSEPH PARKER.

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I.

THE WORD OF GOD.

“This book of stars lights to eternal bliss.”

*George Herbert.*

## I.

### THE WORD OF GOD.

SOME writers, of the highest Christian standing, have brought themselves to look upon the Bible as a book obviously marked by incongruity, self-contradiction, historical impossibility, and occasional moral outrage, in which, nevertheless, many a direct and genuine message from God may be found if sought for with a reverent, humble, and obedient spirit. Such writers, regarded as a class, decline, with an energy hardly less than vehement, to speak of the Bible as "the Word of God," yet, happily, they are equally emphatic and fervid in declaring that in ancient times the Word of God came to individual prophets and suppliants, and that a record of the communication is to be found in the Bible. The writers in question go much farther than this, their urgent contention being that the Word of God not

only *came*, but that it *comes*, is coming, has always been coming, and that as a gracious necessity of spiritual progress it will always come to living and holy souls. It is important, even at the risk of verbal tediousness, to make this clear, because, differ from them or agree with them, we are dealing with friends and allies who are spending their lives in the exposition and propagation of their own view of "the truth as it is in Jesus," and whose holy zeal warms and stimulates the whole action of the Christian Church. We are dealing with brethren, not with enemies, with believers, not with infidels, and with men whose conception of the case may some day prove itself to be right. It is a worthless orthodoxy that cannot stand the test of all fair criticism, and it must be a superstitious and faithless faith that conceals its credentials in fear of their possible invalidation. On all sides of these great inquiries we are in quest of truth. We want to get down to the rock of reality. We desire, however much we may be unable to agree in intellectual opinions, to realize the presence of that Blessed Paraclete—God the Holy Ghost—whose office it is to guide the meek and the faithful into all truth. The brethren whose theory

I am about to consider, and in parts strongly to oppose, are of opinion that no little harm has been done to the Bible itself by claiming that as a book it is "the Word of God." They wish the Bible to be properly defined. They regard it not as *being* but as *containing* the Word of God. They are not afraid to say that the Bible as a book abounds in errors, that some of the authorships are nominally fictitious, that many of its dates are incorrect, that some of its books are of composite and not of individual authorship, that Moses may have written little or none of the books which bear his name, and that David may never have heard of the Psalms which are ascribed to his harp and pen. Yet they claim that humble and obedient souls may find "the Word of God" in the Bible, but not in the Bible alone, for that Word, they say, comes to men every day as a distinct and direct message from God. Every day brings its own message. That may be so. Certainly this view does not discredit or limit inspiration. On the contrary, it insists upon the fact and worthily magnifies its value. But the view must not be regarded as original. It must not be supposed that some man discovered it yesterday. It is a view for which other

men have suffered. Young men are now gaining applause for saying that for which older men suffered social and professional martyrdom. The least such young men can do is to acknowledge the wisdom and courage of their forerunners. In discrediting the value of second-hand learning we should take great pains to escape the humiliation of second-hand originality. Gratitude never disgraces Genius.

It has been said by writers whose view I am about to consider that the Bible itself nowhere claims to be "the Word of God." Very much is made of this point. It is said there is no foundation in the Bible itself for the common practice of speaking of it as the Word of God. "Boldly challenge those who thoughtlessly employ the term." Who are they? I would first inquire. The word "thoughtlessly" sets up a prejudice. It is misplaced. Having regard to the whole history of the Church, it may be unjust and impertinent, certainly it cannot assist in the elucidation of the argument. A man is not necessarily "thoughtless" because he differs from me. He may be only modifying my omniscience. If the Bible nowhere claims to be "the Word of God," and if the

absence of a claim is equivalent to the absence of a right, we must carefully consider the issues. Suppose the Bible does not claim to be the Word of God, what then? Is it not, therefore, the Word of God? May it not be all the more the Word of God on that very account? Does the Bible ever claim to be a book at all? Then it is not a book. Does the Bible ever claim to be a unit? Then it is not a unit. If the Bible is only what it claims to be, then what is it? Does it make *any* claim? Is it, to speak figuratively, at all conscious of its own existence? Besides, if inspiration comes daily, if it is always with us, if "we may find truth flowing toward us like the dayspring from the dewy eyelids of the morning," if all this is really a fact, who is able to say that inspiration may not be retrospective as well as prospective? That it may not claim for the Bible what the Bible does not formally claim for itself? That it may not inspire its readers as certainly as it inspired its writers? It is not for us to dogmatize. Possibly God may interpret the past as surely as he may reveal the future. It was precisely in this way that Jesus Christ dealt with his disciples. He took them back upon the old records. He showed what Moses

meant in a way which Moses probably never knew or understood. So it is just possible, for manifold is God's counsel and his paths are in the great deep, that he may have put it into the hearts of his people to speak of the Bible as the Word of God.

There are some rights which do not require to be formally "claimed." They wait for recognition. They are self-revealing; they establish themselves little by little; they grow, so to say, like reason and conscience and sense of responsibility. I am speaking of the mere matter of "claim," and inquiring what it amounts to as an argument. I suggest that it may amount to nothing. Shakespeare may or may not claim to be a poet. The mere matter of claim is frivolous. Sometimes the claim may have to be set up by the observer. We come upon some conceptions unexpectedly and suddenly, as when the startled dreamer said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." There was no finger-post at Haran pointing out the road to a sanctuary and setting up a claim, yet Jacob found "a certain place" concerning which he exclaimed, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God,



and this is the gate of heaven." Between the evening star and the morning star there was a pregnant dream. A cloud rich with visions enswathed the sleeper's head, and a still, small voice, unknown to the vulgarity of sound, thrilled the dreamer's soul like a whisper from Eternity, and the environment was changed in all its significance. Who can say that inspiration coming down from heaven to-day may not have shown holy men by what name to name writings seemingly scattered, chaotic, and unrelated? A man may not claim to be great, yet he may be the greater on that account. Some men are not known until they die. Their claim is set up by posterity. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." The crown comes after Calvary. A place may lay no claim to consecration, yet it may affect us like a sanctuary of the Presence, a Zion inhabited of God. The Bible cannot live upon testimonials, or "claims," or official sanctions; it can only live by such a supremacy of influence as entitles it to the faith, the love, and the veneration of the world. If it has exercised that influence—account for it variously as we may—that influence is the Bible's best claim. It is not a formal claim. It

is a claim that had to be discovered. The pearl had to be dug for, but it was there before the spade cut the concealing sod. So the true meaning of God may have to be discovered in the Bible. One man discovered gravitation, and named it; another may discover inspiration, and connect it with the Holiest Name. My own inquiry as a Bible reader is not, What did the prophet mean? but, What did the Holy Ghost mean when he spake through the prophet? The prophet is dead; the Spirit lives, and he must be his own interpreter.

Carefully observe that at this moment I am speaking only of "claim," of which so much is made. There may be no formal claim, no scholastic claim, no legal claim, yet, seeing that inspiration may be retrospective as well as prospective, it is surely open to us to inquire whether the inspiration, about whose present-day action some men have not the shadow of a doubt, may not have guided other minds to a correct appreciation of the Bible. It is said that Jesus Christ is the Word of God. But those who say so must not flinch from the application of their own test. Let us therefore reverently ask, When did

Jesus Christ himself ever claim to be the Word of God? I do not ask what other men claimed for him. Nor do I ask what other men saw him to be in vision or in ecstasy. I confine my attention to the fourfold life of Christ given in the New Testament, and I ask not what John said about Christ, but what Christ said about himself. Where did he specifically and unequivocally claim to be the Word of God? As to the Fourth Gospel, some highly trained men have thrown doubts upon its authorship, and John Stuart Mill—certainly not “a man of one book”—quotes the Fourth Gospel as an illustration of what he means by foisting upon Christ words that Christ never uttered. Hear Mill’s testimony :

“What *could* be added and interpolated by a disciple we may see in the mystical parts of the Gospel of John, matter imported from Philo and the Alexandrian Platonists and put into the mouth of the Saviour in long speeches about himself such as the other Gospels contain not the slightest vestige of, though pretended to have been delivered on occasions of the deepest interest, and when his principal followers were all present.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Theism,” p. 254.

That Jesus Christ was the Word of God, some persons who deny his deity might have no difficulty in admitting. Perhaps that is the very title by which they would be most ready to distinguish him. To myself Jesus Christ is not only the Word of God, he is God the Word. But where did he *claim* to be this in a way so direct as to preclude the possibility of any other view being taken of his Personality? Was it where he grew in wisdom? where he was weary with his journey? where he knew not the hour of the Lord's coming? where he said, "There is none good but God"? where he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Many persons, who cannot justly be accused of thoughtlessness, have regarded such passages as indisputable proof that Jesus Christ was simply the Word of God—the message of God to the human race, God translated into the supremest expressions of excellence. I am disposed to think that the very process by which the Bible is turned from *being* the Word of God into *containing* the Word of God might for the selfsame reason and without the loss of one degree of cogency be employed in an attack upon the deity of Jesus Christ. The parallels seem to me at this moment to be exact. Able men have

asserted that Christ never made any claim for himself that is not consistent with his simply being perfect in all virtue, the sublimest expression of divine excellence. Influential sects have built themselves upon this very doctrine. Large sums of money have been, and still are, subscribed to maintain it. The plea is in many points identical with the reasons given for not describing the Bible as the Word of God. It is contended that if we hand the Bible to men as the Word of God they will instantly point to passages which describe God as cruel and jealous and vindictive in disproof of our doctrine. But that is exactly what other men do when we declare Jesus Christ to be God the Son! At once they point us to his weakness, his weariness, his confessed ignorance, his necessities, his prayers, his declaration that his Father was greater than he, and they demand how we can reconcile such facts and statements with our belief in his deity. In that deity we do believe, and we do not deny the perfect humanity of our Lord. I do not ask what "claim" Jesus Christ made for himself. Theudas (Acts v. 36) "boasted himself to be somebody" yet "all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught." Simon (Acts viii. 9) "gave out

that himself was some great one," yet his name has become the signal of the deepest infamy. I do not set store upon mere "claim." History has given us too much reason to suspect it. I study Christ himself, his words, his ways, his thoughts, his deeds, and thus I am led to exclaim, "My Lord and my God."

The way in which the case has been stated by friends on what I may call the other side indicates the point of what may prove to be their error. Condensed, it is this: "Tell men that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and they will instantly find such and such objection." So they may; but that is precisely what we refrain from doing. Speaking for myself, lest I should load others with responsibility, I never begin by giving the Bible a reputation. I simply say, "Read it; read it all; read it with as little interruption as possible, then tell me what you think of it." I thus leave the Bible to do its own work. You could ruin any preacher, poet, musician, or artist, by giving a romantic description of him before he had an opportunity of showing his own quality in his own way. Much better say, Hear him, study him, get the key of his method, and then form

your own opinion about him. That is all I ask for the Bible, or for the Redeeming Lord himself, and I thankfully add that I never knew that method fail.

As for defining what is meant by "the Word of God," we must remember that there is no final definition. No man can define God, or Truth, or Life, or Love. They are original and indefinable terms. We know many things without being able to define them. Consciousness is larger than formal intelligence. It is possible to intellectualize religious thought and to reduce it to a species of literature—that is, to something that can be appraised and determined by grammar and lexicon and criticism. No wise man will despise any part of this literary apparatus; at the same time the apparatus must be kept within its own lines. The cry for definition may easily become both pedantic and frivolous. In all languages there are expressions which are symbolic rather than literal; idioms which represent our ideal condition or aspiration rather than words which can be separated from one another and parsed independently. In the higher grammar quite a cluster of words may be but a single nominative. The phrase "the-capital-of-England" may be but one hyphenated

word, and may be treated not as an article, a noun, and a preposition, but as a consolidated substantive. When we speak of the Bible as "the Word of God" we may be using a symbolic idiom—an idiom which represents the supreme purpose of the Book—its vital content and soul—in a sense and measure which no merely literary definition can fully express. It is thus that the Bible may be, in my judgment, and is, in my practice, more fitly, more sensitively, more truthfully, described by the thrilling phrase "the Word of God" than by any alternative designation. We require a descriptive which is exquisitely nice, at once profound and delicate, to represent the whole meaning of the Bible. To describe the Bible as "the Word of God" is, in my view, to describe the Book by its supreme purpose, which purpose is the revelation of God in such degree and proportion as the human mind is able to receive it. If I must characterize the Bible either by its human workmanship or its divine purpose—assuming it to have a divine purpose—I deliberately elect to regard it as "the Word of God." In making this election I choose the less of two difficulties. I cannot escape mystery in receiving the Bible, but I escape the



greater mystery by receiving it as a message from God. I know that the penmanship is human—I know that whatever is human is imperfect—yet that does not affect the divine purpose except in the sense that the limited instrument necessarily modifies the illimitable music. The impassioned pianist crushes the keys and strings of his instrument because it can only tell half his thought. Embodiment always means contraction. Incarnation means locality. The kingdom of heaven is larger than its parables, though they be shaped and colored by the King himself. It must be remembered that we are dealing with no less a theme than the revelation of God. How to bring it into words! Eternity is incommoded when endeavoring to typify itself upon the dial-space of time. It is the culmination of irony. The Bible is the revelation of God—Ineffable—in the only setting or framework possible in the present conditions of life. To bring God into language is to bring him within limitations. Words are constantly trying to define themselves, and even to do what they were never meant to do. Words may be better used when simply pointing to what is infinitely greater than themselves, than when trying to say everything

exclusively and finally. There are points in religious thinking at which reverent and adoring silence must supersede impotent definition. Even human history, even autobiography itself, must suffer from embodiment in any one set of terms. The verbal accommodation is too small. The only way in which national or personal history can be written, under present conditions, is the way of one-sidedness, partiality, incompleteness, and badly lighted color. Beyond all the most elaborate and balanced expression stands in silence the Motive, the Thought, the Impulse, the quenchless Immortality for which there are no words—the gold of thought, which cannot be expressed in the bronze of speech. So when I am challenged to define the phrase “the Word of God” I am not ashamed to own that to my mind the phrase typifies a reality which it is impossible fully to express in terms which would not themselves require to be defined.

Speaking thus of the claim of the Bible to be “the Word of God,” and of the limits of verbal and spiritual “definition,” we are reminded of a method of treating the Bible which is known as “dissection.”

My present feeling is that the method of dissection is impossible. But is not the Bible a piece of literature? Only in a very limited sense, and of course within that limited sense it is open to partial dissection; but from my point of view the Bible is infinitely more than a piece of literature, and just as it becomes more it passes out of the region of dissection. We can dissect literature, but can we dissect revelation? We can dissect the body, but can we dissect the life? We can dissect the rose, but can we dissect its fragrance? What is called the dissection of the Bible is not undertaken irreverently. On the contrary, it is claimed that the botanist dissects the flower because he loves it. I think, however, that the analogy is imperfect. There is a botanist's flower and there is a poet's flower. A mother may view her infant's body in one way and an anatomist may view it in another. But is not the infant an anatomical structure? Yes, and infinitely more, and in that glorious "more" the technical anatomist has no rights. So with the Bible. It is literature and it is revelation. It is history and it is insight. It is discipline and it is holiness. The altar can be measured in cubits, but the sacrifice which is offered on it

is a magnitude upon which no measuring rod can be laid. Unless, therefore, the term "dissection" be very carefully guarded and limited, its importance as a method may easily become exaggerated.

Another method of interpretation is not free from prejudice, and is certainly not always safe. It is the capricious method of testing Scripture by what is called "experience." Commenting upon a difficult passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Mr. Horton suggests a meaning, and adds: "If the generally accepted interpretation is correct, the passage must take its place among those opinions or speculations on divine things which are not confirmed by experience." Whose? What is experience? It has been defined as "a term by which a man often covers his mistakes." Is God's truth no larger than man's experience? Compare the experience of to-day with the experience of the twelfth century or the seventeenth! If experience is limited by personality, by whose personality is it to be limited? And if limited, what is the value of it beyond the limitation? And if any interpretation, truth, doctrine, or suggestion lies beyond experience to-day, who can

be confident that experience will not or may not include it to-morrow? I venture, then, to submit that in making experience a final test we are appealing to a capricious and insufficient criterion.

A special danger arises in the form of a temptation to judge the part out of its relation to the whole. I have been enabled to regard the Bible as a unit. I know it is a collection of what may be called tracts or pamphlets, and that probably no one writer knew, or in many instances could possibly know, what the others had written. Yet to my view the Bible is a unit. One part belongs to another. One part explains another. This is indeed very marvelous, considering the different authorships, the different dates, the different environments. It is not difficult to believe that the authors must have been moved by a common impulse, and must have been building a common temple without knowing it. The parts of the temple come together most wonderfully, as if proportioned and fitted by the same Architect. So wondrous is the effect upon my own mind that if any teacher should explain the marvel by saying, "Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," I could accept the solution, my reason, my imagina-

tion, and my heart could unite in exclaiming, "Lo! God is here, and I knew it not; this is none other than the Word of God, and this is the light of heaven!" Nor am I to be troubled by having my attention called to the real or supposed defects of certain portions of the Bible. Can the Book of Ecclesiastes, say some, be looked upon as the Word of God? look at its materialism, its sensuousness, its pessimism. The Book of Ecclesiastes is part of a larger book. Its pessimism is a shadow upon a landscape. There is undoubtedly a pessimistic side of life, and I am glad to have it expressed exactly as it is found in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The Bible would have been incomplete without it. If it were the whole Bible, it would cover the soul with deep darkness; but as part of the Bible it is true to human experience, and the very recognition of it is itself an encouragement to faith and hope. Others say, Can the Book of Esther be part of the Word of God when the name of God is not so much as mentioned in it? For my own part I can see little but God in the main action of that tragedy. God does sometimes govern anonymously. To me it is not an unacceptable conception that sometimes the light is reflex rather

than direct, and that in reading some histories the influence is more obvious than the personality. The one thought to be borne in mind in this connection is that the Bible having been made into a unit is to be judged in its unity even in the very act of considering its parts. Books which may be difficulties when torn out of their setting may assume new color and meaning when regarded in their relation to an organic whole. So also with texts, separate verses, and special commandments which are supposed to present such stumbling-blocks to that sensitive creature, that highly wrought and delicately constructed machine, the infidel. Some teachers are painfully careful of his feelings. He is most sensitive. When he hears that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, he faints. When he is told that the Canaanites and other persons in whose feelings and sufferings he is deeply interested were driven out of the land with great slaughter and loss, he is overpowered. When he comes to passages which seem to direct that the heads of little ones are to be dashed against the stones, he simply lays down the Bible in horror and becomes a larger infidel than ever. Yet, after

all, and speaking with trembling deference, even an infidel may occasionally be wrong. Yet in what white-faced awe we stand before him! How anxious the commentators are to explain verse thirty-six to him in a way that will soothe his exasperated feelings! How deeply anxious the preachers are so to explain the Almighty that the dear and sensitive infidel may take a more lenient and hopeful view of the general way in which the universe is managed as a whole. For my part I will not make an idol of an infidel. Again and again I would say, notwithstanding the apparently impious audacity of the assertion, that even an infidel may sometimes be wrong. I can at least imagine it possible that in the final audit the Bible writers may have seen farther than some who are shocked by their statements. Evils do run out their consequences to the third and the fourth generation. Nations are as a matter of fact displaced and replaced in a mysterious way. Even little children are dashed against the stones. If these facts be degraded into mere anecdotes, they are made horrible by first being made contemptible; but set in their right atmosphere, thrown into their true perspective amid the ever-coming and ever-vanishing



centuries, read in the larger light—even in God's high noon—who knows but that it may yet be proved that it was the infidel who was wrong? The dear and sensitive infidel cannot receive the Bible because of verse seventy-nine; then why should I receive the world when I am first invited to believe that there is a devil? I am shocked by the suggestion. Every nerve quivers with agony at the very thought. Yet my infidelity does not destroy the devil. I can sooner destroy him by my faith than by my unbelief. My faith enables me to realize that the devil and all his angels are the chained slaves of the Eternal Throne.

The phrase "the Word of God" (whatever it may precisely include) is one of frequent occurrence in the Bible itself. It might be supposed from reading some writings that this phrase is quite a modern invention—a "thoughtless," "loose," "misleading" expression. The phrase occurs in all varieties of form in the Bible. I claim for it that it is a Bible term. Whatever may be its meaning, it does in innumerable instances occur in the Book itself. Perhaps, therefore, it has a meaning. At all events, it

is of importance thoroughly to impress the mind with the fact that the phrase "the Word of God" or "the Word of the Lord" is certainly as old as the Bible. Thus:

"The word of God came to";  
"the word of our God shall stand forever"; "making the word of God of none effect"; "the people pressed on him to hear the word of God"; "the seed is the word of God"; "the Gentiles received the word of God"; "so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed"; "many corrupt the word of God"; "handling the word of God deceitfully"; "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God"; "the word of God is quick and powerful"; "it is not meet that we should leave the word of God."

These are only samples of an almost countless number. The apostle Peter speaks very definitely about the word of the Lord. He says, "The word of the Lord endureth forever," and as if anticipating our modern inquiry, What is the Word of the Lord? he answers—"And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter i. 25). We are justified, then, in saying that the expression "the

Word of God," whatever it may precisely mean, is intensely biblical. The answer which is given to us is that there is no difference of opinion about this, the contention is that the expression is never applied in the Bible itself to the Bible itself—in other words, the Bible nowhere calls itself by that name. So we return to our first ground, By what name does the Bible describe itself? Does it ever describe itself? Because it does not describe itself, may its readers never describe it? Some teachers suppose that they have met the case by describing the Bible as "a record." The term "record" is in great favor with them. But a "record" of what? Surely more than a record of names, births, ages, wars, migrations, and anecdotes? These may properly come under such a designation as "record." They can be fully and literally set down, registered, attested, and otherwise treated as events having a beginning and an end. But is there nothing more in the Bible? What is that something more? Is there not something more in Moses than Moses ever dreamed? Why have a Bible at all, except as we may have other so-called sacred books which may be interesting memorials of ancient and perhaps exhausted nationalities? What

is it that gives the Bible its uniqueness? That is the quality which I wish to get at and appreciate. Now tell me distinctly, if you can, what that quality is. When I have beyond all doubt discovered that quality, I can have no difficulty in making a definite claim for the Bible. Is there anything in the Bible of the nature of prophecy, communion, fellowship with God, insight, motive—anything about or bearing upon prayer, eternity, sanctification, election, trust, destiny—anything that goes infinitely beyond records, schedules, registers, and genealogies—anything that takes in all the centuries and gathers up human history into a unit? What is the supreme purpose of the Book? Does the Book anywhere claim to have a supreme purpose? If it has not a supreme purpose, why was it collated and published? If its supreme purpose, claimed or unclaimed, is the revelation of God to the world, I have no difficulty in regarding it as the inclusive and authoritative Word of God. One writer does give an answer to the question, What is the Bible? He says, "It is, to put it briefly, the sacred and inspired record of the Word of God," etc. He calls the Bible "the canon of sacred Scripture." Now where does the

Bible claim to be a canon? Does the word "canon" ever occur in the Bible? And by what authority does the writer speak of "*sacred* Scripture"? How often does the word "sacred" occur in the Bible? Is the word "sacred" in the Bible at all? Is it not an ecclesiastical word? Is it not in its very face and form a priest's word? When I am "boldly challenged" as to the ground on which I describe the Bible as "the Word of God," I in my turn may "boldly challenge" the challenger to give me his biblical authority for calling the Bible a canon, or calling the Bible "sacred Scripture."

The Christian Church should welcome all the light and aid of the best scholarship in the elucidation of the Bible. There is no orthodoxy so despicable as that which sneers at scholarship. I want all the help I can get in endeavoring to make out the purpose and meaning of the Bible. If the Bible as a whole is not the Word of God, I wish to know it. Superstition is mischievous. Prejudice hurts the soul. Do let us encourage reverent and competent scholars to dig deeply and speak fearlessly. It is in this spirit that I am about to make a revolutionary suggestion.

Why not re-edit and reconstruct the canon in the light of present-day knowledge? The form might be changed; the substance would remain. The formation of the canon was a human work. The Bible as we have it was never seen either by the prophets or the apostles. If the best scholarship of the Church is prepared to prove that there are literal, historical, chronological errors in the Bible, why not cut them out? Why not publish a revised canon as well as a revised version? If you meddle with the human side of the Bible at all, why not meddle with it thoroughly? I venture to think that this would be turning orthodox scholarship to the best use. It is high time we got rid of all false traditions. I would not spare them on the ground of their age, I would abolish them on the ground of their unfaithfulness. Do let us, I repeat, get down as far as possible to the rock of reality. If "the early Fathers took over from the rabbis a collection of baseless theories," let us get rid of them. If "the only evidence in support of their claims is found in the traditions themselves," let us plainly denominate them false witnesses. If "Canticles and Ecclesiastes are not Solomonic but post-exilic," reconstruct the canon

accordingly. We may correct a date without disturbing a morality. Scholars will, of course, be very sure of their ground before they rearrange the canon, but being sure of it they should take a definite course, stopping at the point where their knowledge ceases. If we know the errors before sending out the Book, why not keep back the Book until we have corrected the errors? I press the inquiry. If we cannot re-edit the whole, why not re-edit a part? Why not undertake the work within the lines of the Hexateuch? Why shrink from re-dating and re-signing the Psalms? I press the inquiry in the hope that the answer will be that the task is in the main impossible. Probably the answer will be that the truth and the error, the factual and the moral, the local and the universal, are so intermixed that useful separation cannot be effected. That would be an important admission, because—

First: It would help to show that Revelation is given within the only setting or framework which is possible—faulty

because of human infirmity: incomplete because of human imperfection—and

Secondly: That, therefore, we now have in the Bible the only framework of revelation that can substantially represent the many centuries of evolution and growth through which biblical history has passed.

What if the canon itself cannot be substantially amended? Who knows how far divine inspiration may have directed its contents and construction? If there is a perpetual inspiration, who can say with definiteness and authority that when wise and holy men undertook to build the temple of the Bible they were forsaken of God?



## II.

### THE PERMANENT QUANTITY.

THERE is a permanent quantity in the Bible about whose inspiration the Christian Church is substantially agreed. Probably we shall never have a definition of inspiration which does not itself need to be defined. By inspiration I mean a statement, doctrine, message, or discipline, which separates itself from all ordinary thinking, which so far separates itself as to throw ordinary thinking into obvious contrast, and which associates itself with such a quality of moral discipline as to exclude the idea that itself can be the fantasy of a wanton imagination. I lay much stress upon the quality of the discipline; it is not mere pain; it is not a trick of vanity; it is not a sordid spectacle set up for sordid uses: on the contrary, it searches the heart; it purifies the motive; it abases and chastens the imagina-

tion; and, above all, it creates a desire and a yearning for the good of others all the world over akin to the love which created the cross. This conception of inspiration enables me to accept the Bible, correctly translated into English, as the Word of God. The Bible addresses itself to the greatest subjects—Creation, Providence, Redemption, Sanctification, Destiny. Upon all these subjects its tone is dogmatic, solemn, impressive. The conceptions of the Bible are as large as its subjects. It guesses nothing, postulates nothing, apologizes for nothing. We may apologize for the Bible: the Bible never apologizes for itself. All this would be incomplete, and as evidence would be only partial (at best suggestive and inferential), but for that peculiar quality of discipline upon which the Bible inexorably insists. The Bible makes no bid for popularity. It risks its popularity by its severity. It does not ask for homage based upon concession. It does not approach our confidence through the medium of our vanity. It takes us back to our ignorance, our weakness, and our shame, that it may take us forward to God's wisdom, Christ's almightiness, and the Spirit's miracle of holiness. Thus the Bible is not only a sublime revela-

tion of God, it is also a penetrating and sanctifying discipline of man; and because of this double action—this complete and effective ministry—I have no scruple in speaking of the Bible as “the Word of God,” founding that title not upon anything claimed by the Bible for itself, but upon its supreme content and purpose. If the Bible were not the Word of God, or if the title “the Word of God” were a blasphemy or even a vital mistake, I think that, having regard to its own limitation and its special purpose, it would have warned me against making an idol of it, and would have said, “See thou do it not, for I am only a record of a progressive revelation, and I abound in nearly every kind of error, not literal only, but moral also.” If I had the faintest scruple as to estimating the Bible as the Word of God, it would be dissolved by the fact that the Bible constantly seeks me in God’s name, offers me God’s love, welcomes me to God’s pardon, and constrains me to obedience to God’s will. So large, so tender, is the Spirit of this wondrous Book! The Bible was not written to tell me what the Jews did, but to tell me what God did through the Jews. What the patriarchs or the Jews did three thousand years ago can have only an

archæological interest for me; but the moment I see the divine movement or the divine purpose in the Book I say, "I will turn aside and see this great sight," how in so small a space I can see the genesis of history and the very outline of God! Under the happy influence of this feeling I have great confidence and intense joy—even if without technical and formal authority from the Book itself—in prefacing the public reading of the Scriptures with the solemn invitation, "Let us read the Word of God." Another minister would, I infer, substitute this more discriminating form, if he used any form at all, "Let us read the sacred and inspired record of the Word of God." If it came to a question of internal claim on the part of the Bible itself, I should find no difficulty in upholding at least the equality of the simpler designation.

What is the permanent quantity that is in the Bible—the quantity, in fact, without which there could be no Bible in the sense in which we understand that term? It is, compendiously, *the revelation of God*; it is, in detail, every law that can beneficially affect the condition and the perfecting of

human life—"profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely with every good work." It is evident that the man who wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy believed that some Scripture, somewhere, written by some pens, was inspired; that there was some writing somewhere which he regarded as "Holy Scripture," and that such Holy Scripture undertook the whole spiritual culture and perfecting of man. Now if I could lay my hands on that Scripture, and if I believed it to be what Paul says it was, I could have no difficulty in regarding it as the Word of God. It cannot be too carefully marked that the reference is to something written, and therefore something that could be read; something different from a Personality, yet not opposed to it; a writing, a pamphlet, a book of some sort. In the present inquiry that fact is of vital consequence. Jesus Christ was not a written book. It is with a written form that this inquiry concerns itself. You cannot substitute the word "Christ" for the word "Scriptures" in such a passage as this: "Beginning at Moses, he expounded unto them in

all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." There is a writing, and there is a Christ. According to the Apostle Paul any Scripture which is not profitable—vitaly and permanently useful—for teaching, for reproof, for correction which is in righteousness, which does not complete the man of God and furnish him unto every good work, cannot be regarded as inspired, and every Scripture covering and fulfilling this ministry may be accepted as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Now on the ground of history and on the ground of personal experience it is claimed that the Bible, as we have it, and as we translate it into all languages, brings men to God, makes them men of God, fills them with thoughts of God, and creates in them a desire to be holy after the manner of God, and because it does this, does it openly and subtly, does it constantly and unexceptionally, it is no exaggeration of claim to represent it as "the Word of God." Nor can we so re-edit the Bible as to say with definiteness that the exclusion of what may be called local and limited history would not affect the parts which are avowedly moral, spiritual, universal, and permanent. The Bible is impregnated through and through with one infinite

and glorious purpose. Take out of the Bible every passage that refers to God, that accounts for creation, that relates to man, that dwells upon Redemption, Forgiveness, Righteousness, and Sanctification, take away all the passages bearing upon the restoration and comfort of the human heart, the purpose of human discipline, the subjugation of sin, and the salvation of the world, and what is there left? So immensely do these great subjects overshadow all other subjects, and so exquisitely do their several modes of treatment constitute one noble harmony, that it would be a conscious injustice on my part—I dare not speak for others—to hesitate to pay homage to the Bible as verily and abidingly “the Word of God.”

It has been said by a German writer that the difference between false religions and true religions is that the one has documents and the other has living prophets. It is happily the distinction of the Christian religion that it has both. It is a marvelous combination of the ancient and the modern. From my point of view the Bible is at once the oldest and the newest of books. I have found it safe to suspect

the newness which has no antiquity, and to disregard the antiquity which has no modern applications. Time is old, but every summer is new. The earth is old, but the grass withereth and the flower fadeth. When the flower blooms it is Eternity smiling in time. Christianity has indeed its documents, the individuality of each entering into and enriching the individuality of the whole. Genesis and Job are not the same in style, but it is the same man who is tempted, the same devil who tempts, the same God who protects, the same God who rules the issue. The Chronicles of the Kings and the Acts of the Apostles are varied enough in style and action, yet there is something within the whole movement and evolution which makes them hard reading for atheism. So wondrously have we seen Providence working in personal experience and in national history, that it is now evident that men may be working in different ages and different countries, in total ignorance of each other's existence and labors, and yet serving a common purpose as if moved by a common impulse. There may not be so much difference in age and country and language and environment, as we sometimes suppose, or within all the accidental difference



there may be an invisible link—even that wondrous line, beyond sight and touch, which stretches “from everlasting to everlasting.” The atom and the planet are both from God—the single soul and the consummated race.

The Christian religion has documents. To one test they may be fairly subjected. Can any man add one true line to the moral or spiritual code which is set up in the Bible? Can any man publish an appendix of omitted morals? Can any man add to the tender balms and solaces provided in the Bible for broken hearts and wounded spirits? We have had centuries of education—this age represents the latest wisdom of the world—can we, with such advantages, add a solitary tittle to those Scriptures which are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work”? That is a fair challenge. It is in the line of questions which are asked in the Bible itself. God challenges the deities manufactured in the smithies of the world. He says that no man can add a cubit to his own stature, or turn one hair

black or white. Can man enlarge the circumference of the earth by one half inch? Why not, then, boldly challenge the world to add one line or tint to the moral excellence of the Bible? No such addition has been made. Variation, illustration, adaptation we have had in happy abundance, and we desire to have more and more, but to the integral substance nothing can be added. Art sits before the same landscapes; music interprets the same breezes; poetry handles the same harp; one generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. Another fair question is, If the moral code of the Bible is complete, how is that completeness to be accounted for? Does any theory so thoroughly satisfy the inquiry as the answer, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"? That answer I am able to accept in all the fullness of its meaning and so to regard the "Holy Scripture" as indeed and in truth "the Word of God." But have not some beautiful hymns been added to the Bible? Not one. They are only beautiful because they are biblical. Have not some noble moral apothegms been added to the Bible? Not one. If one, produce it. If you

produce it, I will engage to find it in the Bible as to its spiritual veracity. If any man thinks he can add to the commandments of God, he may be the man who was in the Apostle's mind when he wrote: "If there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There are, then, germ-commandments. There may be more in a commandment than there seems to be. Man's genius, even in commandment-making, cannot outrun or exceed God's inspiration.

How are the biblical documents to be read? Can the technical or strictly professional grammarian read them? Can the mere elocutionist bring himself within the lines of their innermost meaning? It must, in simple justice to my purpose, be distinctly understood that in speaking of the grammarian or the philologist, I speak of him only in his academical capacity, and in that capacity I hardly hesitate to deny his ability to read the Bible at all. I even doubt whether he should take upon himself the office of an interpreter. In holding this opinion I am not underestimating his ability; I am recognizing the peculiar quality and unique purpose of the Bible.

Thank God, the Church has ever been rich in men who are happily both grammarians and interpreters ; I am, however, speaking of grammatical experts who do not even profess to care for the Bible more than for any other book. A man may be able to parse a book without being able to understand it ; and a man may approve the grammar of a book in the very act of combating its doctrine. In reference to the Bible the grammarian pure and simple has an undoubtedly important work to do, but a still more important work to leave undone. He must pass from grammar to sympathy before he can understand or explain some passages. Grammar deals with syntax, philology deals with words ; sympathy penetrates the writer's soul, and elicits the half-expressed meaning of his heart. Perhaps only the mother can read the child's letter. But will God reveal more to ignorance than he will reveal to largeness of knowledge ? Who can say ? His way is in the whirlwind and in the cloud, and it is not known. He says he will look to the man who is of a broken heart ; and a little child is his image of greatness in his kingdom. It may be that some kind of ignorance is a qualification for receiving spiritual mysteries. Humility may

be more and better than syntax, and "babes" may be trusted with revelations withheld from "the wise and prudent." "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." God rejects the narrow wisdom which offers incense to its own vanity. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." "We speak the wisdom of God, which none of the princes of this world knew." It was to very plain men that Jesus said: "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Grammar and philology are indispensable within their own lines. No man must imagine that he is wise because he is not a grammarian. The dogmatism of ignorance never rendered any real service to the truth. The cant of self-depreciation may be but concealed infallibility. It is important to make these things clear that error may be avoided on both sides. Jesus Christ was reproached with never having learned letters; yet his sayings are unfathomable, tabernacling in letters as angels might halt under the roof of men. My submission, then, is that the Bible is more

than a book; it is marked by a peculiar quality—the quality which makes the Bible what it is—a separating and differentiating quality—call it supremely spiritual, or call it distinctively supernatural—and that quality can only be penetrated by a spirit kindred to its own, and that in the reading of the innermost meaning of the Bible spiritual character is the chief medium or instrument of “the higher criticism.” The moment inspiration begins, the apparatus of criticism must be changed. It is admitted by all who regard the Bible as something more than an interesting collation of very ancient literature, that there is some kind of inspiration in it, that God is revealed in it, and that God’s will in some sense or degree is made known in it. At that point literal criticism begins to feel its limitations. At that point another function of inquiry or appreciation comes into action. The Apostle Paul puts the matter in the most lucid and acceptable manner when he says, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned, judged, or examined.” The Apostle claims that some things are “revealed through the Spirit.” He says, “The Spirit searcheth

all things, yea, the deep things of God." The most profound literal criticism will pause at this point, and the ablest scholars will themselves be the first to confess that they are standing on holy ground. I claim, then, that in the degree in which the Bible is inspired, it can be truly read only by the ministry of the inspiring Spirit, and that he only who receives the Holy Ghost can feel the power of Holy Scripture. The lexicon cannot supersede the Spirit.

With a theology so vast, so sublime, yet so practical, calling us to all that is mysterious and ghostly in adoration, summoning the soul into the inmost sanctuary of the Invisible God—without a shape on which to rest the affrighted eye, or a line on which to lay the trembling hand; calling us onward and upward through a silence that makes our very breathing a conscious trespass, and through a light from which our very purity shrinks in shame—with a theology so practical as to search our hidden life as with fire, to test our standards and balances, to bring our words to judgment, and to track our daily course with the criticism of God—with a theology demanding personal incarnation in fellowship and

service, charging us with the sacred trust of representing Christ to a hostile world, and constantly charging us to prove the reality of our faith by the sincerity of our love—with such a theology handed to us by inspired penmen for exposition and exemplification, who does not see that high above all other qualifications—even prophecy, tongues, mysteries, and all knowledge—must stand in holy isolation and solitary privilege the PURE HEART that alone can see God?

But there are not only documents, there are living prophets. It is claimed that some men are now inspired. It is also claimed that preachers, teachers, prophets may now receive direct messages from God, and that until they do receive such messages they have no right or authority to preach. We must understand this statement before we can receive it. What does it mean? The inspiration of the human heart is perfectly possible apart from the reception of a new or personal message. We may be inspired to read old messages aright. There may be an inspiration of delivery as well as an inspiration of authorship. We may be inspired to read and not to



write. "Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures." "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." If we meditate day and night in the divine law, we may receive a truly divine inspiration without being conscious of having received a formal message which has been withheld from every other praying soul. Every man will be inspired according to his own individuality. But we must beware lest we make any Scripture of "private interpretation," and cry, "Lo here," or "Lo there," without Christ's authority. Inspired men may be least conscious of their own inspiration. The more a man is inspired, the more clearly will he recognize inspiration in others. It is so in art, in statesmanship, in character; why not in our estimate of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," and "the glorious company of the apostles"? If every man is to preach the special message which he is supposed to have received from God, we shall have not a few conflicting inspirations. But precisely the same difficulty arises from an inspired reading of an inspired book. All sermons do not agree. All doctrines do not agree. All conceptions of the Church do not agree.

Yet all are supposed to be traceable to the Bible or to be actually founded upon its distinct teaching. Able attempts have been made in all Christian centuries to propitiate the infidel when he has asked whether such and such discrepancies can be reconciled, or such and such sanguinary policies can have been instigated or approved by a God of mercy, or such and such anomalies would be permitted to exist if the supposed Ruler of the world were really omnipotent. But that line of questioning only begins the deeper and bitterer interrogation—it is unbelief in its crudest state. Unbelief not only attacks the historical and external contradictions of the Bible, it follows faith into the interpretation of what we call the deep things of God, and ridicules its most cherished sanctities: unbelief mocks at prayer; it jeers at a Bible out of which both the Trinitarian and the Unitarian bring convincing and overwhelming proof; it mocks the Arminian and the Calvinist, as each goes to the same book to prove that the other is wrong; to the most solitary and august of all sufferers it says, “Save thyself and come down from the cross;” and it flippantly regards the future as a cloud, and heaven as a fantasy. Unbelief is

not confined to technicalities. It is really a mistake to suppose that Unbelief is standing outside the ring-fence of Faith sobbing out its tender heart and begging Christian scholars to explain how, in Samuel, David took from the King of Zobah a thousand and seven hundred horsemen, and how, in Chronicles, he took from the same king, apparently on the same occasion, a thousand chariots and seven thousand horsemen. Dear, sweet, guileless Unbelief is quite prepared to enter the church and enjoy the sacraments if only the number of horses could be made the same in one book as it is in the other. No, no, that is not the measure of Unbelief. That is only where Unbelief begins. When he has been satisfied respecting the horse and his rider, the docile infidel will say, "And how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" Do not imagine that the delightful infidel, that pet of all juveniles, is only waiting to see the Hexateuch properly dated and properly signed, in order that he may adopt the creeds and idolize "the historic episcopate." Infidelity, where it is honest and courageous, sets itself in ostentatious hostility along the whole line of the supernatural, the revealed, and the in-

spired, and not merely against certain literal and obvious discrepancies. By all means let discrepancies be reconciled or removed—scholarship is quite equal to this useful work—but do not suppose that the successful readjustment of chronologies, dates, and authorships will lead the infidel to accept the Bible as “the inspired record of the Word of God.” I question whether it would even help him to do so. Possibly it would bring into more vivid and revolting significance the fact that he “did not like to retain God in his knowledge” (Rom. i. 28). It is not for me to become a judge of motive, or to defame men simply because they differ from me; neither is it for me to contradict “the inspired record of the Word of God” when it declares that certain men “became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened,” and “they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

I am addressing myself to the point that men may to-day be as directly inspired as were the apostles, and I merely noticed the infidel by the way. That

there are honest infidels may be quite as true as that some men are born blind. My point is that even now teachers who see no reason to doubt their own inspiration differ from one another in their interpretation of "the inspired record of the Word of God." Then what is the value of inspiration? When a house is divided against itself can it surely stand? When inspiration has lost its consistency has it not forfeited its authority? Can a fountain send forth sweet waters and bitter? If the inspired men of the present day give different views of fact; if the very first sentence in some of their books is a misstatement; if their very prefaces are marked by glaring errors of fact—does not this throw a strong light upon some things in the obviously mechanical part of the Bible? Is there not an inspiration of doctrine? Is there not an inspiration that leaves the self-boastful intellect alone and delivers its holy message to the obedient heart alone? There is no need to be afraid of apparently conflicting inspirations where the moral purpose is noble. The poorest of all consistency may be identity in words. I do not doubt that a strong biblical argument could be drawn up in support of free-will, and certainly

an equally strong argument could be drawn up in support of predestinarianism. Nothing can be clearer than the humanity of Christ as delineated in the New Testament; he is called "a man mighty in word and deed," and again he is called "the man Christ Jesus"; he said he did not speak his own words, but the words of him who sent him; he said his Father was greater than he, and "being in an agony, he prayed." On the other hand, Jesus Christ has been adored and trusted as God the Son, and his deity has been defended out of the very New Testament which is supposed to have proved his simple but holy manhood. Paul is supposed to have taught salvation by faith, and James is regarded as having taught salvation by works. It is possible that some minds may regard these as infinitely greater discrepancies and confusions than those connected with dates, localities, battles, spoils, and pedigrees, and if they are irreconcilable I agree with the estimate formed of their importance. They do not put my faith to any strain. There are great discrepancies amongst human minds. There are great discrepancies in each individual human mind. Man may be described as self-discrepant. Inspi-

ration operating through such instruments must be affected by the medium of its action. One man is a poet, another is a reasoner; will they report upon any mystery in the same way? Will they see exactly the same thing and nothing more in any fact in life? I believe that Jesus Christ was a man, and I also believe that he was God the Son. Faith has its function, and so has obedience. Man's will is free within God's sovereignty. The bird may fly in the open firmament, but it cannot pass beyond the horizon. Things apparently so antagonistic do not necessarily contradict each other; when justly interpreted, they may complete each other. It is along this line that I find satisfaction and peace. A chapter of Paul should be followed by a chapter of James. The miracles and the beatitudes should be read together. This doctrine of mutual completion should be applied along the whole line of thought and experience. No one minister is the ministry. No one communion is the Church. No one man is humanity. We need all the parts to make the whole, and we need the whole to understand each of the parts.

I am not indisposed, then, to believe in present-

day inspiration, and present-day prophets, under conditions which can be clearly stated, the principal condition being that current inspiration shall operate with biblical lines. The reason for this limitation, if it is a limitation, is that the inspiration of the Bible is inclusive and complete. This would be a mere statement if it could not be instantly followed by illustrations and proofs. My submission is that in nothing whatsoever that is wise, good, true, can present-day inspiration make any advance upon the Bible. That is a clear issue. Happily it is an issue that can be submitted to practical tests. Take the supreme question of character. The quality of manhood that is produced or contemplated by any book is a good test of the quality of the book itself, provided always that the character is not merely pictorial, but vital and beneficent. What, then, can transcend the biblical conception of character? It is character founded upon a New Birth. At this moment we are dealing with the conception and not with the inner mystery. Has modern inspiration made any advance upon that conception? The New Birth means in its evolution, holiness, completeness of the divine image in the soul, new creat-



uanship, eternal life. Can present-day inspiration indicate any omissions of excellence and supply them? If detail is required, here it is: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." Can one word be added? Take the question of Social Beneficence. Socialism, variously defined, is the rage of the hour. Have we moved one step beyond the Bible-line? I trust we have inspiration enough to be just even to the Bible. Has any man added one tint of beauty to the parable of the Good Samaritan? Has the modern prophet ever sent a tenderer message to wandering souls than the parable of the Prodigal Son? Is social service poorly represented in the closing words of the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew? Through and through, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is saturated with the spirit of sympathy, and alive with the doctrine of social responsibility. What, then, can present-day inspiration do? It will find its function in obedience. New forms and new applications are possible, and in occasional instances may even be desirable, but the root-ideas are in the Bible. That Book is more than a record. Records

refer to the past, but the Bible claims and rules the whole future. That is an infinite distinction. I call special and prolonged attention to it. The Bible is, indeed, a record; but it is also a revelation. It is not only a tree on whose fruit the ancients fed, it is the Tree of Life, and its leaves are for the healing of nations yet unborn.

### III.

#### THE ORIGINS.

WHAT are some of the main results, in reference to biblical criticism, from a popular point of view, which recent inquiry has for the moment accepted? The inquirers are, I cannot too clearly and impressively repeat, our friends and companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and their supreme object is not negative but positive, not destructive but constructive. They are not excelled by any of us in their ardent love of those parts of the Bible which they believe to be inspired. Less and less, as life advances, am I disposed to wrangle with anti-christian or infidel critics, even though they come from a foreign country and overbear us with rugged names. I am not afraid of them. They come and go like epidemics. It is infinitely otherwise with brethren whom we love and honor, and whose holy

example is amongst us like a light from heaven. What, then, are some of the main positions which our friends invite us to accept? In a popular and general form they may be stated thus :

1. Some biblical books are either anonymous or pseudonymous.
2. Inspiration does not guarantee historical accuracy.
3. Some biblical books are wrong in date, wrong in numbers, wrong in chronology, and misplaced in canonical order.
4. Biblical authorship, or editorship, is composite: Bible representations of some great events are dual and even conflicting, as, for example, the two accounts of the Creation and the two genealogies of Christ.
5. The Bible is "the inspired record of the Word of God."

If we had to deal with experts only, no difficulty of an insurmountable kind need arise in connection with these positions; but as preachers we have to deal largely with novices whose instinctive judgments ought to be regarded, lest in treading them down we do violence even to some rude form and

expression of the kingdom of God. These judgments may be generally indicated thus :

If the Bible is wrong in history, what guarantee is there that it is right in morals?

If the Bible is not a reliable guide in facts, how do we know that it is a trustworthy guide in doctrines?

If there are two creations, why may there not be two resurrections?

If there are two genealogies, why not two Christs?

If the Bible is untrustworthy upon points which we can definitely test, how do we know that it is to be depended upon in matters we cannot prove?

These inquiries may be crudely put as to form, yet they are neither unreasonable nor unnatural, nor are they to be treated with professional haughtiness or contempt. Pedantry may sneer at them, but scholarship never sneers; scholarship often pities, and always helps. Scholarship is patient. To patience scholarship owes its riches. The inquiries, then, are popular, perhaps rude, perhaps shallow, but not, therefore, insincere. In view of such in-

quiries, and in the very degree in which they express an excitement which may cool into unbelief, may not popery claim to have a good defense when it insists upon revelation passing to the people only through the channel of the priest? Popery says, in effect, "The Bible is literature; only scholars can understand it; it is written in many languages absolutely locked against the populace; let the priest deal it out discreetly; do not throw pearls before swine; let the Church keep all the keys." And does not Protestantism pass the Bible to the people, in some instances, through a kind of popery of its own, even through a kind of monastic uniqueness of learning, which can only be understood by experts and specialists? I ask the question in the hope that it can be answered in the negative. I am jealous lest the Bible should in any sense be made a priest's book. Even Baur or Colenso may, contrary to his own wishes, be almost unconsciously elevated into a literary deity under whose approving nod alone we can read the Bible with any edification. It is no secret that when Baur rejected the Epistle to the Philippians as un-Pauline Christian Europe became partially paralyzed, and that when Hilgenfeld pro-

nounced it Pauline Christian Europe resumed its prayers. Have we to await a communication from Tübingen, or a telegram from Oxford, before we can read the Bible? The Bible is not the Bible to me because Herr Baur countersigns it, but because it reveals, as no other book has yet revealed, the almightiness and the all-love of the Eternal God.

We are cautioned, however, against calling the Bible the Word of God. It is said to be so mixed up with human error that such a designation might give a false impression. But is not a false impression of exactly the same kind given about the earth when we say

“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S”?

We may not, according to some teachers, say the Bible is the Word of God, but we may say the earth is the Lord’s. How do we know that the earth is the Lord’s? Who told us? We ought to produce our authority for the bold assertion. Astute observers have not hesitated to say that whoever made the world, whatever else he might be he certainly was not almighty. John Stuart Mill (“Theism”) says

that the Kosmos is marvelously ingenious, "but," he adds, "nothing obliges us to suppose that either the knowledge or the skill is infinite." He thinks the human body is an artful contrivance, but he is of opinion that it might "have been made to last longer" (page 181). Yet we go on saying that the earth is the Lord's regardless of Mr. Mill's tender bringing up. He thinks that the groveling condition of the human race is an argument against the omnipotence of the Creator, yet he thinks—and his magnanimity should be appreciated—that "the divine power may not have been equal to doing more" (page 182). Yet we go on saying that the earth is the Lord's. We dare not say that the Bible is the Word of God, because some infidel will point to chapter four or verse twenty-one and ask if such and such words could have come from lips divine; and we dare not say that the earth is the Lord's because John Stuart Mill would be shocked by the suggestion that such a faulty world could have been created by an almighty agent. Probably in setting up such opponents as the portal through which alone we can properly approach any proposition we are hampering our inquiries by needless conditions.



Sometimes the enemy should be consulted last, not first.

We are wisely cautioned against reading meanings into the Bible. We should be also cautioned against reading meanings out of it. If books are rigidly human, we have no right to force upon authors meanings which never entered into their thoughts. The meanings may be vast and brilliant, yet we have no right to treat arithmetic as an effort in poetry. When a man has made a plain turnpike through his estate we have no right to credit him with having seduced the Ganges through his private grounds. But when books are of another quality altogether—if they are in any way inspired—if they, by the very nature of their contents, can only partly express the authors' thought and feeling, and if the authors themselves say so, such books may be justly treated from the point of suggestiveness, and thus there may be found in them the seed of many thoughts, as a forest may repose in an acorn. In the case of the Bible we have a book which deals with infinite subjects only by way of indication, never by the method of exhaustion. As the Spirit helps our in-

firmities in prayer, so he will help our infirmity in reading, and thus he may show us wondrous things even in familiar places. I do not want to know what Moses said; I want, as before explained, to know what God said through Moses. He may tell the reader more than he told the amanuensis, yet all the larger meanings may be in the very words of the original dictation! The amanuensis is dead: the Author cannot die! We do not believe the revelation because it is signed, we believe it because of what it is in itself. It is of small consequence to me who wrote the Book of Genesis, but it is of infinite significance to me that its very first sentence is a compendium of the total revelation of the Bible. Minds are variously constituted, so much so that it is sometimes almost impossible for one man to understand another. I cannot expect, therefore, to be universally understood when I say that there is nothing substantial and far-reaching in the whole Bible which is not anticipated and implicated in its very first sentence. To some minds this will be rhetoric, poetry, fancy, fantasy; yet to my own mind, and provable to my austerest moods, it is the simplest and most convincing logic. In the first

verse of the Bible I find the message of the whole volume. That first verse may be represented in various ways. As a manner of announcement it is sudden thunder. As a revelation it is morning dawning through gathered darkness. As an answer to mute but hopeful wonder it is like sunrise on the sea. This is the infinite speech :

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”**

Taken as a mere sentence, can it be exceeded in grandeur? Taken as a conjecture, can any addition be made to its sublimity? Taken as an inspired thought, who can heighten its elevation? Taken as a direct voice from Eternity, who can charge it with apology or incertitude? If this sentence is not the very Word of God I dare not, I cannot, I will not, say it is the word of man. Let us listen :

“IN THE BEGINNING,—The remotest date that has yet been suggested. Science has its slow-rising and slow-falling centuries, yet “the beginning”—the dateless date—includes them all and drowns them in a deeper sea. On that ocean millenniums are tufts of foam.

“GOD,—

Personality, Will, Thought, Purpose: an undefined Definition—matching the unbeginning beginning—an impersonal Personality—the shapeless Shape. God! He enters his own Book instantaneously. He comes not as a spectacle, but in the very glory and supreme purpose of Action.

“CREATED,”—

A process; slow, quick, deliberate, infinite—before all speech, therefore baffling it; before all form, therefore without comparison—the beginning of Action, therefore without parallel.

Man never spake that Word on his own motion. He was told to speak it. Eternity delivered the secret to him, and whispered it in fit syllables. There is no mark of man upon it. It is a planet he never molded. It is the Morning Star.

Yes; I find everything there. Now that I go back upon it how clear it is that this is the protoplasm of revelation. Within how small a compass can the Eternal dwell! What comes after this will be the attenuation of itself. To meet our ignorance God goes into the very detail in which man has lost him. To create is not a stopping-point in the divine action. “Created” is a pregnant word. It

is necessarily initial and incomplete as a mere term. If God "created" he did everything which that word can imply :

**To create is to PROTECT ;**  
**To protect is to REDEEM ;**  
**To redeem is to PRIZE ;**  
**To prize is to COMPLETE ;**  
**To complete is to GLORIFY.**

Creation, therefore, is a complex and multitudinous act, not an ostentatious and dazzling display of mere might. Man begins much and finishes little. His broken columns stud the cemeteries of the ages. He may be tracked by his abortions. Even a woman may forget her sucking child. The sub-creator, proud and wanton, selfish and shortsighted, may be a monster, and may judge the Creator by his own littleness. That is our continual temptation. We infinitize ourselves and call the issue God! Man can leave his plow in mid-furrow, and abandon his tower when half built, but God having "created" will accomplish the fullness of his purpose and place the approving crown upon the perfected miracle of his grace.

As to processes needful for the detailed evolution—processes of many kinds, natural, social, military, imperial, personal, disciplinary—they will come and go in infinite variety of combination, and when rightly grasped they will all be seen to help the central and dominating purpose. The danger is that we may be lost amidst the incessant and cross-moving details. The moment we lose hold of the unit the fractions may make inroad upon our faith. When we are troubled by the second verse we should instantly return to the first. There we have read of the creation of the earth, but we have heard nothing of man. Yes we have. Man is in the first verse. The house implies the tenant. No man builds a house that it may stand empty. There is an unwritten logic even in commonplace daily life. The earth has no meaning in itself. In itself it was not worth creating. Does a lock suggest nothing beyond itself? Is the bride a picture self-complete? Does she fill and satisfy the altar before which she stands? Even a palace is ghastly emptiness until inhabited. One little child would turn its gilt into gold. One human look would soften its glare into a home. Thus I see man, and all God's dealings

with man, in the one word "created." The account of the creation has been called a poem—a convenient term for the concealment of unbelief and the flattery of ignorance; but to my mind no drearier prose can be read if Man is omitted from the stately action. Grass and herb, and trees and waters, and sun and moon and stars, and great whales and flying fowl, cattle and creeping things, so moves the ponderous monotony, until the unseen image of God is revealed and humanized, and God and man stand face to face in the fellowship of love. Then we begin to understand. Then the future begins to grow out of the seed of the present. Then sunbeams are smiles. We have seen a Vision, and it has made all things new. We know what it is to have seen our own other life: that thrilling moment the heart can never mingle with the common time; the sight of Destiny is the date at which the exultant soul passes its transfiguration. At that point what to me is the Word of God begins, and at that point it might end if I had eyes to see. In the spirit created by that experience—that first sight of the meaning of things—I must watch all the detail, or it may bewilder and unsettle me. The immeasurable spaces of time that

may separate the events no imagination can compute and designate. I do not know what a "day" is or a "word." I only know that God and man are in conference, and so infinite is the stoop of heaven that the terms of conference are practically equal. By and by I shall see how man dresses his garden and keeps it. If man should fall from "our image and our likeness" all that he does will bear the shameful stigma of his guilt. His language must be tainted by his deceit. The shadow of death will lie along the whole way of his life. Yet I shall not on that account undervalue the created heavens and earth. The earth is still the Lord's, though loaded and burdened by the cities of man. The moon and the stars shine by God's ordination, though an unholy reek, hot with human wickedness, veil their placid luster. My suspicion of man need not shock my faith in God. I will hide myself in the first sentence of the Bible as in an appointed place.

Taking this view of the first sentence of the Bible, I find no difficulty in discerning in it Jesus Christ and all his work. This "God" is a plural Deity yet One; plural because One; in arithmetic one may be



solitariness, in life it may be completeness. The discerning of Christ in this verse would to some minds be what is called spiritualizing; to my mind it is the true literalism. So variously are we constituted, though the humanity is the same! Paul had no difficulty in seeing Christ in all the action and purpose of creation. Nay, more, of creation the incarnate Christ was the first-born—

“the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible; . . . all things have been created through him, and unto him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Where did Christ claim this for himself, except by implication? How did Paul come into the possession of this mystery except by that Spirit which brooded upon the waters when “the earth was without form and void”? Let us indeed take care lest we read meanings out of texts as well as into them. Where God has been, all beauty has been, all music, all light: the sermon can never hold all the text.

Christ is here and I knew it not, and Calvary, yet I did not understand. The Atonement is older than the Creation, not in historical time, which is of yesterday, but in the divine thought, which is from Eternity. Christ is the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." He was before all history. Moses wrote of him, and Abraham saw his day. His visible personality was but a parenthesis in a movement of infinite sweep. We will perversely live in the bare, bleak wilderness of history when we might revel amidst the riches of the Ineffable, and thus we starve the soul, and stifle prayer at the very point where it might have become praise.

As certainly as Redemption was involved in Creation, Ascension was involved in the Resurrection. It is curious, and full of profitableness, to watch how the flower is involved in the seed. Curious, too, to observe how everything is something more than itself, looking backward and reaching forward so as to complete its identity. When Christ rose from the dead the rising was the beginning of the Ascension; its foretoken and hostage. Christ did not rise that he might establish a miracle and then die again.

“Death hath no more dominion over him.” He “was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father.” “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more.” This is the full meaning of Resurrection. “In Christ shall all be made alive.” The Ascension is not a separate and independent act. All such acts go back to the multifold word “created.” It must be more than a word to us; it must be many words in one. Creation is ever a movement toward life, larger life, life more abundantly, life that floods out death. Interruptions will stand in its way, but they will be overborne and abolished. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” But has death no antecedent? Is it a word cut off, and standing apart without explanation? Nay, verily. The same law prevails here. Death is the fruit of sin. And is “sin” in the word “created”? It is. We put many things in a wrong light if we deny this. We de-centralize the Eternal Throne. We must not dissociate sin from the forethought of God, and start some rival providence. But is God the author of sin? There we begin to be deceitful with ourselves. We stand on the brink of a mean quibble. We do not realize the infinite immensity of the

occasion, so we cannot bring in the relieving lights, the healing compensations, the far-away totality. Some questions must be reserved. Enough for my immediate faith that there is but One Creator, and that he is able to work the final reconciliation. Sin troubles me as a problem, and if I could not set God above it, and hand it over to his sovereignty, I could no longer pray. Not here but there, not in little time but in boundless eternity, shall we see death and hell cast into the lake of fire.

Prayer is another action involved in the term "created." Creation implies creaturehood. Creaturehood implies—it does more, it necessitates—Prayer. Creaturehood means limitation, and limitation means necessity, and necessity is unspoken prayer. The question is not, Whether we will pray. We cannot help it. Once realizing the veriest rudiments of civilization—once above the line of savage life—we must pray; perhaps not intelligently, not definitely, not reverently, but prayer cannot be stifled by adverbs; the prayer will be there. It may be only a fear, a hope, a look, a superstition, but there it is. It may be degraded into idolatry, or it

may be invested as a hypocrisy, yet it remains and operates in the life. We may even change the word without changing the thing signified; we may speak of aspiration, longing, wishing, yearning, desiring, but we do not shake the reality we have not courage to avow. When we pray we are true to our creation. We get back to God's first thought of us. When he created man his purpose was fellowship. That fellowship began in conversation; on man's side it passed into a cry for pity. Creation explains prayer. Creation, rightly understood, compels prayer. We have lost something and must find it. To-day, to-morrow, or the third day, we must somewhere, be it on the hill where the light laughs, or in the valley where the graves are cut, somewhere, in garden or wilderness or furnace of fire, we must pray—in our soul's burning fever we must find a God or invent one.

After this review of the contents of the first verse of the Bible, I return easily and with fuller conviction to my first position, that the whole Bible, as to its supreme purpose, is by implication in that verse, and in the degree in which I grasp that thought the

Bible becomes to me the Word of God. As to how that Word may be written, or in any way set forth, how it may bear marks of editorial error as to authorship, dates, numbers, and details, that is a question which must be left to experts and specialists; but even they must be careful not to invert proportions and relations so completely as to give the idea that the divine element in the Bible is a little straggling rill feebly making its way around huge boulders and through hot sands of human ignorance and Jewish prejudice. From my point of view the disclosure of that divine element is the one reason for which the Scriptures were written. If it was the one reason for which the Scriptures were written, there can be no difficulty on my part in describing the Scriptures by their main and indeed sole purpose, and not by the mechanical execution either of authors, editors, or canonists. But what of the infidel who will point to some hard text and stumble at it? Nothing. Beginning at that text he begins at the wrong point, and beginning with him I should begin with the wrong man. I do not dismiss him from my consideration, yet I cannot accept him as the standard by which the Bible is to be judged.

But where does the Bible claim for itself that it is the Word of God? In its structure, in its unity, in its purpose. Again I would remind myself that the assertion or non-assertion of mere claim is nothing. Our friends claim that the Bible is a marvelous unity, but, we might retort, where does the Bible claim unity for itself? If argument is to be founded upon literal claim, the inquiry is as good in the one case as in the other. Viewed from their standpoint, it is simply impossible that the Bible can claim unity for itself. It is written by many writers. Its writers probably knew little or nothing of each other. It is a collection of pamphlets. The Scriptures spoken of by the apostles did not include their own writings; at best the reference is to the Old Testament, and now it is submitted by some that the Old Testament is but a record of what God did in the days of the ancient Jews, and that its claim upon our attention is remote rather than immediate and authoritative. What, then, of the marvelous unity, and where is that unity claimed in the Bible for the Bible? And is a book nothing more than it formally and expressly claims to be? Suppose we say that Blackstone's Commentaries are the highest

authority upon the subjects they treat, where does Blackstone make any such claims for his Commentaries? If we find that he makes no such claim, shall we degrade the Commentaries into a secondary place? May not a book create its own standing, and become all but canonized by universal appreciation? I am not prepared to regard the Christian Church of all ages as an anonymous mob, nor am I prepared to deny continuous and direct inspiration; and putting these two things, and all they involve, together, I must treat at least with respect the estimate which has been placed upon the Bible by the Church universal. If I have to choose between the judgment of the Church, and the criticism of the infidel who is shocked by isolated texts, I will choose the judgment of the Church.

There are two passages in the New Testament which may greatly assist us in our reading of the Scriptures. Perhaps by following out all their meaning we may be able to see how a claim may be set up even within the Bible itself for its own unity and its own inspiration. One of these passages occurs in the narrative of our Lord's Temptation in the Wil-



derness. When the tempter quoted a text, the tempted Saviour replied: "It is written AGAIN." Scripture completing itself is the best commentary. And that is the best answer to the infidel who is horrified by Exodus iv. 24-26. Say to him: "It is written AGAIN." Do not blot out the passage in order to calm his perturbation, but set another passage beside it. The Bible is self-interpreting. Where the pool is bitter, the tree of healing is close at hand. Here the concordance may be the best commentary. "Again, another Scripture saith" (John xix. 37), is the greatest answer that can be returned to any inquirer. Within the Bible you will find both the enigma and the answer. The second help to a right understanding of the Bible I find in such words as these:

"And his disciples remembered that it is written. . . . When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered. . . . and they believed the scripture. . . . When Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him. . . . Then remembered I the word of the Lord."

Thus the word may remain a dead letter until experience gives it vitality and force and claim. In the interpretation of many Scriptures, Experience is the efficient scholarship. We know the twenty-third Psalm because our souls have passed through it line by line. We do not supersede grammar; we pass into a region it cannot enter. I venture to think that if we read the Scriptures in the light of experience and history many an obscure or forgotten passage would become expressive and prophetic. We should be startled into many an exclamation. History is the amplification of Scripture. Experience is the corroboration of the Bible. "Then remembered they"! "When he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered"! So it is with ourselves. Memory is awakened within us every day. Deeds we had forgotten stand out in radiance. Words little heeded at the time have, years afterward, given up their secret as the sea gives up its dead. Some texts are for the far-off centuries to explain. The explanation of other passages we shall find in heaven.

Meanwhile what is to be our attitude in relation

to Christian scholarship? It is to me very pitiable that the Christian scholar has so often to fight his way into recognition, all the while being suspected and distrusted by many people who have not a shadow of a right to sit in judgment upon him. It is also not a little discomfoting that doctrines which have in England fought their way into popularity are to-day the occasion of almost martyrdom to some eminent leaders in America. Forty years ago men were expelled from professorial chairs in England for laying down dogmas and suggestions which men then unborn are now preaching to influential and applauding congregations. Christian scholarship has no other wish than to know the truth and to make it known. By all means let it be watched; by all means hold on to the old until the new has been proved; at the same time make ample room for Christian learning, and give our scholars to feel that we expect them to be thorough and independent. Any Bible that can be stolen from us is not worth keeping. If we hold revelation in the letter only, it may be corrupted by the moths, or thieves may break through and steal; but if we hold it in the spirit, if the heart knows and loves the meaning of

the Word, we shall be safe in a great fortress, we shall feed on the bread of heaven. On the other hand, scholars must continually assure us of their well-defined and inexhaustible limitations, knowing well that at many a point on the sacred way they must put off the sandals of grammar and lexicon, and stand before God in the nakedness and humiliation of absolute Necessity. This they know right well, and so long as they work in the spirit of that knowledge they must be held in honor and in reverence. Be the Bible what it may, we owe it to scholarship. Let us not smite the hand which has reaped and garnered our largest harvests. No one knows so well as the scholar himself that he can do little or nothing with the first verse in the Bible. Its main words stand infinitely out of reach of his apparatus. As the heaven is high above the earth, so is the word GOD above all other words. We can approach God only at the lower end of his ways—the whispering of his strength—less than an echo of the thunder of his power. Even when he clothes himself with the universe his figure cannot be described—even in history there is a tumult rather than

a presence—even in Christ the mystery is not lost. In thinking of God we have been compelled to think of him under the conditions of Personality. The Bible itself so represents him. What personality means who can definitely and finally say? Is it only a symbol to start from? Is it an indefinable term? Are we, notwithstanding all our claims and boasts and ambitions, mere outlines of personality, with just too little of its quality to know anything of its fullest meaning? Personality is a term we must not strain too much. If we use it aright, it will help us a little here and there; but if we overstrain it, possibly it may become the precipice narrowly separating between us and destruction. When we connect it with what we know of life, intelligence, and sympathy, it may be most helpful. But these words themselves require definition. Life is as mysterious a word as God. What is intelligence but a dimly lighted line lying between ignorance and omniscience? And sympathy is love in action. But what is love? What? Thus we are always kept outside—outside of our very selves; half-interpreters of our own words, self-menders, apologizing to ourselves to-day

for having mistaken or misled ourselves yesterday. In this condition of things we are thankful for all the aid of learning, yet we feel that outside of it, above it, beyond it far, are many things which can only be "spiritually discerned."

## IV.

### THE LIVING WORD.

**T**HAT Jesus Christ came into the world is a fact supported by other evidence than that of the New Testament. Here we are not dealing with mythology, but with history. Then let us raise the question—

#### **Why did Jesus Christ come into the World ?**

Some say that Jesus Christ came into the world that he might reveal the Father; others, that he might show us an Example; others, that he revealed himself as the head of the race; some, that he might prove in his own blameless and hallowed life the possible perfectness and obedience of self-sacrifice. He showed how self-will might be overcome. He was the supreme Virtue. He was the ideal Man. In him all human excellence culminated. All these

answers I reject simply on the ground of insufficiency. To my mind they do not rise higher than the level of personal opinions. They are not revelations; they are not even audacious guesses; the answers are not of the quality of the question. The only sufficing answers that I know of are in the New Testament. Modern inspiration may have discovered them to be wrong, yet I receive them after asking to be guided by God the Holy Ghost. Here they are:

“He was manifested to take away our sins.”—I John iii. 5.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”—I John iii. 8.

“The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John i. 29.

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”—I Tim. i. 15.

“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—Luke xix. 10.

We feel at once that these are not mere opinions, nor hesitant guesses, nor such answers as any mere



man outside the election of grace could have given. If they are wrong, they are the sublimest mistakes in history. To bring the personality of Christ within the compass of our opinion would be a profane impertinence. Once Jesus Christ himself showed how impossible it was for mere opinion to compass the magnitude of his Personality. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" This was a challenge to Opinion to do its best. It was a magnificent opportunity. Having heard all that Opinion could do by way of criticism, Christ inquired, "But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was the answer of Revelation. Christ instantly and as it were exultantly accepted it as such. For that reason I would humbly go to Revelation for all my answers. Opinion has mocked me: Revelation has filled my soul with light and joy. It is assuredly profitable for doctrine. The answers which have just been quoted are so clear as to make it evident that but for sin we should not have known Christ after the flesh—in the manner of what we now call the Incarnation. We owe Jesus to sin. But what is sin? It is a familiar word in the New Testament,

Without it such a Testament would have been impossible. Yet Jesus himself hardly ever used the word, perhaps never in exactly the same sense in which the apostles used it. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it would be substantially true to say that sin is a word hardly named at all. In John the term does occur a few times, but hardly in the Pauline sense. Yet Jesus was manifested to take away our sins! For this purpose the Son of God was manifested! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!

What is sin? Let us regard it as disobedience, violation of law, revolt from God, self-will, self-indulgence, each of these, all of these, even more than all. It is easier to feel what sin is than to say what it is. A possible difficulty may be thus stated: As sin is a spiritual offense, why not overcome it by spiritual means? Why an incarnation, a crucifixion, a blood-offering, a resurrection? Does the remedy lie along the same line as the disease? As the offense was moral, should not the remedial agency be moral also? It is characteristic of the greatest

questions that they cannot be wholly answered. It is especially characteristic of the Bible that its events bring their own explanation. No book calls for so much retrospect as the Bible. Other books can explain themselves at every point of their own progress, but the Bible explains in one century what it said in another. Its very revelations are enigmas until the answers come. This was made very clear by Jesus Christ himself, who after his resurrection began at Moses and the prophets and all the Scriptures, and expounded to the dejected disciples the things concerning himself. Why could they not read them intelligently for themselves? There was the writing, why did they not read it and grasp its meaning? When Jesus Christ expounded the Scriptures, he re-wrote them. He is still their one Expositor. The Bible is a sealed book to the oldest and wisest of men until it is opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Thus the Bible is not to be compared with other books. Its meaning does not come through criticism, but through spiritual illumination; it is the gift of God. The reason of the Incarnation, then, must be found in the events which

accompanied and followed it—in the events which may be happening in our own day—in the present facts of our own experience.

The Incarnation of Christ was the divine answer to another incarnation. Sin had already clothed itself with flesh. It had made itself visible above all other spectacles. It had darkened the whole sky. There is no doubt about this degraded incarnation—sin had poisoned the very blood, and shamed the heavens with wantonness. Christ, then, had not to address himself to a metaphysical or transcendental difficulty—a spiritual tragedy which had not come into the sphere of words and deeds—something living far back in the soul, as a specter hardly assured of its own existence. That was not the problem. The world was lying in the wicked one. It was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Here is an insight into its condition :

“When they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was

darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and to four-footed beasts and creeping things. They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backsliders, haters of God."

That was the problem! That was the first incarnation! *Then* was Jesus born in Bethlehem of Judea, and the people that sat in darkness saw a great light.

If, then, we want a definition of sin, we must read its own history and thus study its own incarnations. It is not an etymological term; it is a bitter experience. To the intellect sin may be little more than a word more or less indicative of some superficial or temporary flaw, slip, irregularity, or mischance: to

the heart which has seen its first vision of holiness, it is everything that can be typified by the word "hell"—it is the abominable thing which God hates—it is a blasphemy which disdains the portrayal of words. There must be a vision of sin as well as a vision of holiness. They have reciprocal effects. We must see ourselves before we can see God: we must see God in order to see ourselves. This is a difficulty in words, yet the heart knows the answer to the riddle. But how can there be sin if man is an evolution rather than a creation? Has he not come up through all the countless ages higher and higher, glorious with ever-brightening splendor? If we say Yes, we do not disprove the Bible account, we may only illustrate it. Even science may be confronted by practice, and compelled to pay some attention to commonplace. We ourselves are the best answers to the evolution which flatters us. Let us talk the matter out quite frankly:—We have come up from the lowest form of life; we have outgrown many signs of early degradation; we have, through millions of ages, passed from beasthood to manhood; we can think, speak, act; quite true; but does it follow that we cannot sin? Can we not bite and de-

your one another? Is murder impossible? Is falsehood beyond our reach? If we can do wrong, when did we begin to do it? Why did we begin to do it? When did we become conscious of it? If it is a part of a great Necessity, why do we punish it? Why not tolerate it in others? Why complain of it? If it is point in progress, why chafe under it, resent it, condemn it, and load it with penalty? The Christian contention is that at whatever point man did wrong, at that point he needed divine interposition. There must have been a moment when man became a responsible agent, whether he was developed or created, the proof being that he is now, at all events, a responsible agent, and the argument is that when he became a responsible agent he did something which affected his own moral standing and history. That something we call Sin. That something called Sin Christ was manifested to destroy, to take away, to forgive. Evolution is a theory: Sin is a fact.

It was to the fact of Sin that Christ immediately addressed himself. He began to preach, and to say Repent. That was his first sermon. The keynote was full of significance. "Repent," pronounced by

such lips, was a condensed statement of the world's condition. "For the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was Christ's way of announcing his own Personality. He was himself that kingdom and its King. In this business of sin-destruction the earth needs the heavens. The action is spiritually astronomic. The motive or the reason must come from above, not to terrify by its dignity, but to sustain and redeem by its sufficiency. Hence the mingled tragedy and glory of that opening call—

**"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

Then came the miracles, saying the same thing in another language. They were full of the kingdom of heaven in its tender, domestic, healing aspect. They were gospels for the body. But not for the body only, only for the body as an entrance to the soul. It was the inner vision Christ wanted to open when he healed the blindness of the body. The leprous flesh was cleansed that a way might be found to the leprous soul. After the sermon and the miracles came the cross, repeating the same mystery of thought and recovery, but with a pathos



unique and ineffable. The cross cannot be explained. To nail our poor theories on that tree but shows how our love has cooled and stiffened and expired. It is a mystery as a fact; it is a mystery as an explanation. Yet a mystery which communes with the heart and fills it with unutterable joy; a twilight mystery; the password of the evening breeze, on which the Lord ever comes to Eden; a mystery better known through tears than through speech, yet that may be known in a way no words can explain. We must not think of it as too dazzling to be useful, but as too tender to be rejected. I would only remove the mystery from the cold intellect that I might transfer it to the glowing heart.

But the cross is associated with blood. Yes. We must not set up our refinement against Christ's agony. Let us warn our very souls against the shameful affectation of being more appalled by the blood than by the sin. A very wonderful thing this is that man should have become so refined as to shrink from blood and yet be able to speak of sin as if it shocked no feeling. Thus we deceive ourselves. We pretend to sink the sinner in the gentleman when

we stand before the cross. This may be the deepest depth of infatuation. On the other hand, we must not think of blood only, but of the blood of Christ. Nor of the blood of Christ only, but of "the precious blood of Christ"—the very word being twice qualified, and thus raised out of common thought into regions of dignity and holiness. The last of Christ's miracles before the resurrection was to turn his own blood into wine. That blood lay beyond the reach of Roman spear. That blood did not fall upon the earth and waste itself in the dust. Corruptible gold could have bought corruptible redemption, but we have come by faith to know that we "are not redeemed with corruptible things."

When we sink into the humiliation which alone befits our sense of sin—when we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes—the thing above all other things that we do not want is an Example. After redemption we need it, but not before. To preach to me the fact and the doctrine of Christ's Example when I am stung through and through with experiences of my sin is simply to mock me. It is to oppose to me an infinite sneer. I then want a Saviour, not an

Example. I want salvation, not rebuke. Do not say to me, See in Christ an instance of self-sacrifice and loving obedience, but say to me, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Bring down your gospel to the pit of my helplessness. Tell angels of examples, but to the sinner preach a Saviour. And that Saviour must have in his hands the print of the nails and in his side the wound of the spear. I must see them and feel them by faith. The redness of his apparel must proclaim his quality. He must not come to me in the snow of his holiness, but in the crimson of his sacrifice. The shame of my sin can bear the sight of his blood. This would be ecstasy but for the humiliation and the sorrow of my soul. My contrition takes it out of the rank of romance and sets it at the head of facts. As the cross is the one way to heaven, so conscious sin is the one way to the cross. To the intellect it is foolishness, to pride it is a stumbling-block, but to broken-heartedness and self-helplessness it is the very power and love and glory of God.

The heart has many moods, and the aspects of Christ and his work must be various enough to

meet them all. Science is for experts; the cross is for sinners. As the world is many, so the heart itself is many. It must be met in every experience, especially in its agony on account of sin. The temptation of the expert is to write for experts. He cannot easily change his apparatus. He talks to his peers, or to those who may become his peers, through long training and much acquisition. But the evangelist talks to the common heart, speaking to every man of the wonderful works of God in the tongue wherein the man was born. This is the great translation. This is the pentecostal miracle. Thus, instead of emptying the gospel message out of one language into another, God the Holy Ghost enables every man who has received the gift of life to tell the gospel story in the only truly original language of living and definite experience. Grammar is not excluded; it is subordinated. The expert and the evangelist should work together. In this connection the point is that Christ's work should appeal to every mood of the heart, and that to exclude the evangelical view of that work is to leave the heart without comfort or hope in its bitterest desolation. It is not to be supposed that the world is full of experts who

are only waiting for a rectified record in order to become Christians. We must not imagine that the question of dates is standing between men and the forgiveness of their sins. Such questions are by no means unimportant, yet there are other questions which infinitely transcend them in urgency. Take this case: What must I do to be saved? I have sinned against heaven with an outstretched arm: by day I have no light and by night no rest because of the pain and shame of self-reproach: I dare not look toward God in his righteousness: I am hopeless, helpless, desolate.—What is the answer to the condition faintly indicated by these confessions? for be it always understood that such agony has no adequate speech. I have always found that the best answer is the cross, and that the reply of the cross is this:

1. Jesus Christ came expressly to meet such cases.
2. That Jesus Christ did something for the sinner which the sinner could never do for himself. What that something is no words can fully tell.
3. That Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.

4. That where sin abounded grace did much more abound.
5. That Christ is able to save unto the uttermost.

These are the great evangelical replies, and by them the sincerity of the inquirer may be tested beyond doubt. Broken-heartedness on account of personal sin will never chafe under such gracious and healing counsel. These replies are greater than literal criticism. They are spiritual answers to a spiritual condition. They express the majesty and the pathos of the crucified Christ. There are moments in the soul's suffering when that word

### **CRUCIFIED**

shines with the glory of an immediate revelation. It represents the tenderest love of God. It bruises the serpent's head.

Have we not some hints of deeper meanings in the case of common human suffering? Here is one mourning for his firstborn, and will not be comforted. The life so lonely, the grave so deep and cold, the farewell so long; the poor heart cannot bear it; faith totters under a mortal blow; the very

soul is almost turned into desperate blasphemy. Who amongst us can touch that agony—who dare speak to such sacred woe? Can the physiologist calm the heart by his science? Can the physician recall the vanished joy by some professional statement? Who, then, can find the door of the sanctuary? Only one who has suffered a kindred loss. One who has been crucified. One who knows the password of grief. Sorrow must speak to sorrow. Wound must speak to wound. So with the deeper agonies. We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched. He lays his wounds on ours—he heals us with his blood.

This can hardly be explained in words. Perhaps we may find it convenient at this point—face to face as we are with such unfathomable words as Sin and Blood—to make up our minds to some working estimate of the limit and function of Explanation as applied to Christian mysteries. For my own guidance, personally and pastorally, I have laid down a few governing principles. Thus:

1. The human can never fully grasp or realize the whole meaning of the divine.

2. The inability of the human to grasp the whole meaning of the divine is not a humiliation but a necessity and a discipline.
3. To insist upon the literal and exhaustive explanation of spiritual mysteries is one of the most deceitful impulses of intellectual vanity.
4. Every attempt to bring spiritual mysteries within purely intellectual apprehension is to encroach upon the function of the heart as the best interpreter of God.
5. Obedience to the divine will is the primary condition of knowing all that is knowable of the divine doctrine.

Within the range of these principles I have escaped the frets and disappointments inseparable from fruitless ambitions, and in that degree have been enabled to bring undivided attention to bear in legitimate directions. They have, too, if I may continue to be personal, had a useful effect upon all my endeavors after what is called definite religious teaching. I have lived to know that we can be as definite in declaring a mystery as in stating a fact.



The soul may be a long time in coming to the apprehension of that possibility. The mystery is itself a fact. We have to walk under the sky, not over it. We have to worship God, not to understand him. The honest teacher will never be ashamed to say, "I do not know." He must often say so, and at these points, marked against trespass, he and his students will unite in common prayer, and temptation may be resisted by fasting. We cannot be as definite in the statement or even in the apprehension of spiritual truth—the truth which is without form—as in the statement of scientific facts, for reasons which lie within the facts themselves. Science concerns itself with phenomena, with the measurable, the ascertainable, the concrete, and when it gets to the limit of phenomena it stops, lest it should stumble upon a religion. With what does religion concern itself? With God and sin and motive, with redemption, forgiveness, character, destiny. Science can make all the words it wants for the telling of its wondrous tale; but religion is always short of words, and so is driven into exclamations and impetuosities which literalists easily mistake for cant. It cries out, Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? Who

hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Whether in the body or out of the body, the spiritual man is often quite uncertain, and as for the things he hears in the higher places—the subdued thunders, the thrilling whispers, the weird beating of unseen wings, the inscriptions in half-lightning and in half-gloom—he says, such communings and visions are not for words, they are for the heart's mute wonder. In religion there are few things we can fitly tell. Religion can sometimes do little more than hint at its own secret. We can measure the altar, but not the prayer. We can tell all about the Roman gallows, but language is hushed and awed before the Christian cross. The crucifixion is Roman; the Atonement is divine. We know it and receive it and trust it expressly in its character as a mystery. It must not be supposed that because it is a mystery we do not know it. Forgetting that a doctrine may be received as a mystery, we confuse all the higher truths and put them in a false relation. It is a high attainment of knowledge

to know that some things cannot be known. It is just at that point that the divine faculty for which the best name is Faith begins its unique work in the soul. Faith does no commerce in the small market of explanations. Faith has infinite ventures on the seas and continents of mystery. It is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen. Thus we stand in a great mystery. Sin and Atonement, Law and Forgiveness, Holiness and Destiny, are mysteries. We hold them in Christian faith: all we know about them we learned from a Book which has taken such hold of our highest nature that we have come to regard it reverently as

## THE WORD OF GOD.

## V.

### THE WORD TAUGHT.

IT is supposed that Science is definite and that Religion is vague in its dogmas. This supposed difference has sometimes been the occasion of a taunt against the Christian faith in particular. It is said with no little truth that the heterodoxy of one day is the orthodoxy of another. Yet this need not be any reproach. The fact would be the more remarkable if its application could be strictly limited to religion, whereas it applies equally to the whole line of civilization, and may therefore be only a fact because it is first a principle. We may not be dealing with an accident; we may be face to face with a law, and with a law so universal and so urgent as to be the very soul of civilization. If it is true of religion (and I am not prepared to doubt it) that the heterodoxy of yesterday is the orthodoxy of to-day, it

is certainly true of science and philosophy that the knowledge of one century is the ignorance of the next. Civilization is a process of self-correction, yet civilization is inspired by one unchanging purpose. Religion may be perpetually changing its forms and re-adapting its appliances, yet its central truth is eternal and immutable. Prayers may vary, but worship is constant. It may be worth while, however, to examine the plea that there is more definiteness or certainty on the side of science than on the side of religion.

Where shall we find this definiteness? Is it to be found in the history of Medicine, taking that term in its largest meaning? An Egyptian king, as far back as the first Egyptian dynasty, is said to have written a work upon Anatomy. Where is it? Is that work consulted to-day? Hippocrates has a great name as a father of medicine and a founder of science, yet his biographer says that Hippocrates knew nothing of anatomy, and was absolutely ignorant of the relation which subsists between the vital parts of the human frame. Galen, the head of the Roman science of his day, laughed at all the medical sects and refused to

join any of them, preferring the wisdom and the liberty of eclecticism. But is it possible that there are these medical sects? Surely all medical men, being men of science, are agreed? There are allopaths and homeopaths and hydropaths and electropaths and herbalists, but they all live together in happy and beneficent coöperation, because science is definite and majestic in its dogmas, and its believers have all things common, neither does any man say that aught he has is his own. They all say that saliva operates chemically upon certain constituents of food, but they all differ as to how this is done. One man, called Liebig, has published a "supposition" upon the point, and now that "supposition" has been recognized and tolerated by science we may infer that some of its dogmas are not hopelessly definite. All living things inspire the living air, and we are told that numerous chemical theories have attempted to explain how the oxygen is removed from it. Whether oxygen, after forming an acid, unites with the alkalies, or whether it attaches itself to the corpuscles of the fibrin, or unites with phosphorus or fatty matter, we are told that the chemists do not know, but by the time the next encyclopædia

is published something definite may have been found, and then the new dogma will laugh at the old one, until a newer dogma still arises to rebuke the pedantic merriment. Still, science would compassionately recognize religion if religion would only make up its mind to stand by a sworn affidavit. And philosophy, too, is partly under the ban of science because it will not definitely say whether consciousness resides in the brain or imbeds itself in the spinal marrow.

But perhaps it is along other lines that the severity of definite science is to be found. When Sir Isaac Newton said that white light consists of seven different colors, quite a civil war broke out, all the nobodies of Europe assailing Newton, and even the eminent Huygens ranged himself with the blind assailants. Newton said that in the case of light it was impossible to have refraction without dispersion, and *vice versa*; but Tyndall says that Newton was wrong, and Dolland proved it by an ingenious combination of his own. Aristotle and Descartes had elaborated a philosophy of Nature, but when Newton published his "Principia" Aristotle and Des-

cartes were no more heard of, notwithstanding the definiteness of science. But John Hutchinson came along with another "Principia," in which he displaced the vacuum of Newton by the plenum of Hutchinson, and to his own satisfaction demolished the Newtonian doctrine of gravitation. Hutchinson had so learned the Hebrew language as to be able to prove to his own mind that the Bible contains a complete and infallible system of natural history, and if we laugh at Hutchinson we laugh also at Parkhurst, the lexicographer, and at Dr. Horne, Bishop of Norwich, for they were both Hutchinsonians until the bishop came back to the Newtonian standpoint simply to illustrate the possibility of a backslider's conversion and to confirm the infallible certitude of science.

Descartes used to be regarded as a kind of idol, and to be ranked with Plato, Aristotle, and Bacon; yet it has been declared that "the majority of his physical speculations lie, and have long lain, in utter ruin," and Professor Huxley says, "We have left Descartes himself some way behind us." Descartes had a neat religion thus neatly expressed—"I think, therefore I am;" but Huxley strikes out the "there-



fore," because, as he bluntly says, "it has no business there." Huxley holds that the necessary outcome of Descartes' views is Idealism, and there we might have found a moment's peace but for the appearance of Descartes' great successor, Kant, who brought in the doctrine of Critical Idealism, which, among other things, refuses, says Huxley, "to listen to the jargon of more recent days about the 'absolute' and all the other hypostatized adjectives." Behold how these men of science and philosophy agree, and silence your religious contentions! Huxley contradicts Descartes' theory of the motion of the blood, Roemer denied his theory that light is transmitted instantly through space, and Dolland, as we have seen, contradicted his view respecting refraction and dispersion. So much for the unanimity of science as opposed to the melancholy and bewildering divisions of religion! Perhaps, however, it is in Mathematics that Science is majestically and finally definite. Certainty is the very soul of an Axiom. For example, take one of Euclid's very first definitions. A point is position without magnitude. How intuitively we perceive the infinite certitude and exquisite definiteness of this definition!

Yet I now solemnly deny that there is one word of truth in it. I distinctly affirm that position without magnitude is a contradiction in terms. Position is itself magnitude. It may not be magnitude that is measurable by a foot-rule, but it is still magnitude. Even a point takes up the place of some other point. Anything that excludes any other thing cannot be said to be without magnitude. And if one point is position without magnitude, what shall be said of two points? Ten times nothing is nothing, and ten times "without" is "without," so what is true of the one point is true of the ten. It is certain that you cannot put two points in the same place. If you put one on the top of the other, it is still not in the same place. The magnitude is increased by height. Whatever is on the top of something else is higher than the thing on which it rests. I therefore deny the position of Euclid. And I must follow Euclid with equal denial when he says that a line is length without breadth. I say that length and breadth are inseparable. The breadth may not be measurable by a foot-rule, yet it is breadth nevertheless. And when Euclid tells me that things that are equal to the same thing are equal to one another, I call for

qualification or explanation before I can admit it. The fact that A and B are equal to C makes A and B equal to one another is true enough so long as you are dealing with symbols, but in complex reasoning, in reasoning that affects human life, there are no naked symbols, so, having got rid of the symbols, you have got rid of the toy-axiom. A ton of coals and a ton of diamonds may be equal to a ton of feathers, but the one point of equality is in the word "ton," or in the accident of mere weight, and after that the inequalities are glaring and innumerable, so much so as to render the one point practically valueless and contemptible. You will be expecting me to deny that one and one make two. That is exactly what I do deny. What is one? One what? And is "one" possible? Is solitariness possible? Does it not sometimes take two to make one? Is not "one" an assumption? Does it not assume the universe? Does it not assume totality? If we were talking the common language about common things, we need not go into these inquiries, but that is exactly what we are not talking; we are on a line of analysis which, like everything else in the universe, goes back to GOD.

Is science discredited by such self-corrections as have been pointed out? On the contrary. They invest it with the only authority that is of real importance. They show it to be alive. At the same time they should teach it a wise charity and patience in relation to deeper inquiries. What is it that changes in the evolution of Christian thought? Only its forms, its embodiments, its apparatus. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, but his living Church advances into fuller light and acquires a larger language of sympathy and love. Christian teachers might add to their best influence by admitting that they are only growing in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and are but struggling with their first lessons. That, however, need not prevent them dwelling upon the "things which are assuredly believed"; on the contrary, it should drive them in that direction with fuller gratitude and confidence. A spiritual stammerer has no right to be in the pulpit. In the pulpit the speaker should say what he does know, know by love, know by experience, know by prayer, for only thus can he feed the flock of God. Indefiniteness is not greatness. Ignorance is not necessary humility. A preacher

should always be able to fall back upon his own experience. This was the strength of the Apostle Paul. He related the story of his life; he pointed out where he was and what he was when the "marvelous light" struck him blind; he dwelt upon the wondrous interview with the unseen but pleading Christ; he showed how he came out of the great agony into the greater joy; and men who listened were made to feel that they had not only to answer an argument but to disbelieve and reject a man. There must be no indefiniteness about character. The heterodoxy must never be moral. Where intellect shades its eyes, where eloquence interrupts its fluency, character must erect its standard and boldly illustrate the miracle of grace.

Christian hearers themselves need a hint or two upon this matter of definiteness in pulpit teaching. They must realize that Christian truth is not a set of names and phrases which must be heard in every sermon if the sermon is to be considered orthodox. They must learn, too, that all those favorite names and phrases may be there, and the spirit of the gospel be utterly absent. There is an evangelical spirit

as surely as there is an evangelical doctrine. The evangelical doctrine without the evangelical spirit is the ghastliest of skeletons. Who can preach about Gethsemane twice in the same day? Who can measure the rest that should follow a true recital of the story of Calvary? To speak rightly of the cross is to be on it. Yet we may speak of the whole duty of life in the spirit of the cross. What is called common morality would thus be raised to its proper level. We should then discourse of secularism in the holiest temper. We should exalt reason until she prayed at the right altar. We should denounce crime with the wrath of Christ's love. It has often been pointed out that Christ's own Sermon on the Mount is not what would be now considered evangelical. Nor is it, probably, if we look at words only. But what is its spirit? This is the highest of all illustrations of the point that a sermon is not to be judged by its words only. The remarkable thing about the Sermon on the Mount is that Christian preachers have often endeavored to explain it away, not by rough attack or blunt denial, but by the kind of compliment which has removed its supreme doctrines from the rank of practicableness. Thus

they have always made it ideal, transcendental, poetry to be admired rather than prose to be obeyed. In this way they have taken out of the Sermon this very virtue of definiteness. They have turned it into a kind of ethical rainbow, quite lovely and wonderful, a very miracle of color and delicacy, but so wraith-like or spectral as to be practically useless. This will, of course, be largely denied, yet it will remain a fact that the sects and persons most zealously resolved to carry out the letter of the Sermon have been sneered at or pitied as fanatical and eccentric. If any man should be tempted to wonder whether the Sermon on the Mount is definitely evangelical, let him try to reduce its precepts to practice, and he will soon cry out in despair, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

Not only has Definiteness been called for, but Simplicity has also been demanded almost with vehemence. Why this demand for simplicity? It is never demanded in science. The want of it would seem, in the estimation of those who know least about it, to be the crowning proof that at last we have reached a high point of civilization. My submission is that

there are no simple propositions in Christian doctrine. I advance upon this, and submit that what looks like the simplest Christian proposition is more profoundly mysterious than any proposition or canon in science. Take a proposition in Analytical Geometry :

“ If a circle be described about the axis major, then ordinates to the ellipse and the circle to the same abscissa, have to one another the proportion of the axis minor to the axis major.”

To the non-mathematical mind this is an accumulation of mysteries. Is there in Christian doctrine an abstruser proposition? I answer, Yes. If called upon to produce that proposition, I would instantly quote—

**“ GOD IS LOVE.”**

Compared with that proposition, all the profundities and polysyllables of science are the shallowest vulgarities. They appeal to but one section of the mind. They leave the heart, the will, the conscience, and the spiritual imagination untouched. They can be interpreted by a hired schoolmaster. They are intellectual recreations. Yet, “ God is love ” is one of the propositions which is often commented on as



the very flower and perfection of simplicity! Nevertheless we have in those three little syllables a doctrine that goes back to eternity, that unites and interprets the whole evolution and tragedy of experience, that invests the Godhead with personality, and that discovers the foundations of the eternal throne. "God is love" is the inclusive proposition—it is the encyclopædia of doctrine; it is the secret of the universe. Creation is there, and providence, and redemption. That legend blooms in every flower and glows in every star; and it is working its way through all sin and pain and tears, and will work until in a sanctified humanity and a reconciled universe it interprets and crowns the purpose of the cross.

I am not aware that the word "simple" is ever applied in the New Testament to the preaching or the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is a remarkable fact. Let me be regarded as speaking with extreme caution when I say that I cannot recall an instance in which the hearers of Jesus Christ exclaimed, "How simple!" Does the word "simple" ever occur in an intellectual sense in the New Testament? Yet

to-day the cry is, "The simple gospel! Preach the simple gospel! Give us the simple gospel! Trust to the simple gospel!" If Christ never used the term, and if the apostles never used the term, would it not be wise to inquire whether it is proper for us to use it? "The simplicity that is in Christ" is an expression which Paul uses in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, but it has no reference to the intellectual character of the gospel; it is, rather, a moral term equal to "singleness of affection," a characteristic of "a chaste virgin"—a heart intense and undivided. That Jesus Christ never used the term "simple" may be inferred from the popular remarks which were made upon his preaching, such as these:

The people were astonished at his doctrine (Matt. vii. 28). They were all amazed, and questioned among themselves. . . . What new doctrine is this? (Mark i. 27.) Never man spake like this man (John vii. 46). They were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom? (Matt. xiii. 54.) All that heard him were astonished (Luke ii. 47). They were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power (Luke iv. 32).

There is nothing here about simplicity. There is nothing about "the simple gospel." It is supposed that "only believe" is the simplest of all exercises. "Only" does not mean "simply" in the sense that the act is one of ease. Belief is the supreme miracle. It is a condition of birth. It is the Mount of Transfiguration. It is the glorious act of going over from self to God. The obvious danger connected with the popular view of simplicity is that what is so very superficial in meaning may become equally superficial in practice. Men may thus in a sense play with their religion; they can effect compromises; they can adopt expedients; they can modify convictions; in a word, they can have a form of godliness without the power thereof. This kind of simplicity is to be dreaded. All sorts of tares and poison-seeds may be sown in such a bog, some of which may come to fruitage. Better, infinitely better, hold that Jesus Christ is the revelation of God, that he came down from the bosom of the Father, that he is the incarnate mystery of eternity, and the Eternal Firstborn, in whom all life lives and all glory shines. Infinitely better, because when these sublime mysteries enter the heart and involve the mind

in their holy splendors, they uplift the whole being and elevate human character by cleansing and ennobling the motives out of which it proceeds.

Yet we need not dispense with the word "simple," or "simplicity." It is a very significant word when opposed to complex or complexity. Simplicity may be represented as a cloth or web unfolded or without folds; whereas complexity is as a cloth folded, and folded again, and again folded. Or take the various translations of *ἀπλότης* given in the New Testament. It is rendered *simplicity* (Rom. xii. 8), *singleness of your heart* (Eph. vi. 5), and a form of it is translated as a *single* eye, in Matthew and in Luke. The reference is, as just said, to singleness of affection, a heart with one love, a life with one aim. Of that kind of simplicity we cannot have too much, for it means that amidst the conflicts, doubts, questionings, and wonders which accompany all vital education the loyalty of the heart to the glorious Saviour is steadfast and incorruptible. Such simplicity, singleness of aim, and definiteness of love must ever be held to be a luminous commentary upon the gospel itself, which is thus shown to be opposed to all tor-

tuousness of mind, all ambiguity of speech, all crookedness of purpose, all doubleness and wavering of will. If that is what is meant by the simplicity of the gospel, then let it be magnified and illustrated on every hand.

But who is sufficient for these things as an ambassador of Christ? Who can, who dare, accept the responsibility of representing such definiteness and such simplicity? Perhaps we may be enabled to indicate an answer by studying a proposition which has been strongly stated thus:

“Every living preacher must receive his message in a communication direct from God, and the constant purpose of his life must be to receive it uncorrupted, and to deliver it without addition or subtraction.”

Unless I am permitted to define and qualify the proposition I must not only reject it, but do all in my power to guard others from accepting it. Understood in one way—no doubt the way which was clearly before the author's mind—it may have the effect of bringing the preacher's soul under a most

holy discipline, and may be specially useful in discouraging the invention of personal idols; on the other hand, it may create and foster and justify the very evils it was intended to put down. If the proposition is self-complete, it is wrong; if it is to be read in the light of certain strong and even vital assumptions, it may be right. Regarded as self-complete, it puts the individual preacher into a position of exaggeration. It ignores the Bible entirely. It overlooks the fact that there is a common revelation—an open vision—a definite message already written and intended to be brought within the knowledge of “every creature.” The world is not waiting for some holy man to climb the hill of God and bring down a new commandment or beatitude. We have the living Word—we know the heavenly will—we have been with Jesus and have learned of him; we have this treasure in earthen vessels. There need never be any uncertainty about the divinity of our message. We ourselves need to be constantly strengthened, inspired, and enlightened; we must live and move and have our being in God; along the line of individual discipline our duty is obvious and

imperative; but as to our Message, is it not written for us and handed to us as a sacred trust?

Regarded as self-contained, the proposition would seem to create a species of sacerdotalism. It might be regarded as equivalent to this:

Every living preacher receives his message in a communication direct from God, and as a faithful messenger he delivers it without addition or subtraction.

What are the people to do in the presence of such a man? Is he less than a priest, a divinely elected channel of at least a particular kind or quality of grace? Is he not removed from the ranks of brotherhood and set upon an official pedestal? And of what avail is it, except as increasing the irony of the situation, that he abjure gown and bands and stole and chasuble, if in a layman's garb he claim what is hardly distinguishable from a priestly function? The clothes do not make the priest. I am not prepared to believe that God gives direct communications to every living preacher in any sense that puts the living preacher into a category of his own;

my belief is that God communicates with his Church —“ye are God’s clergy;” that he “sends a plentiful rain upon his inheritance,” and that no humble soul is denied a sight of the open vision.

If the position of the preacher is thus made in a sense sacerdotal, notwithstanding disclaimers, what shall be said of the position of the Bible? If preachers are preaching direct communications from God, if the word of the Lord *comes* as certainly as it once *came*, are we to understand that the Bible is a local book, a limited message, an ancient story, an exhausted revelation? The author of the proposition would reply in a vehement negative, but even a vehement negative might not cover the ground. It is most unprofitable to lay down a huge proposition and then to cut it away term by term. Better far, for practical purposes, to reason to a conclusion, to carry forward all the vital assumptions, to clear the ground step by step, and then to announce the grand total of the process. In the degree in which I have done this in the conduct of my own argument, I feel entitled to say that the Bible is to me the contemporary of all ages, a revelation at once ancient and



modern, the living Word which abideth forever, and my conviction is that every humble reader of the everlasting record is encouraged to pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law; yea, open thou mine understanding, that I may understand the scriptures." I would go even farther, and would resolutely test every sermon by the Bible, rather than test the Bible by the sermon, by whomsoever preached. Jesus I know and Paul I know, but I do not know any man who sets them aside. Having listened to the discourse of the truest and wisest preacher, I would reserve the right to search the Scriptures daily, that I might know whether I had been listening to the word of man or to the Word of God.

## VI.

### FUNDAMENTALS.

THE form of personal testimony has thus far been purposely adopted with a view to the strict limitation of responsibility. I have tried to state my own faith—the faith on which I live—in words as clear and simple as I could find. More and more I see that faith must be a man's own. We fail when we try to pass faith on from hand to hand as a set of words which no man may change. Words were made for men, not men for words. There need be no wonder that in the coming and going of words some things may seem to be new which in fact are really old. It is only the word that is new; the truth has put on a new form for a new day. The old trees dress themselves in new leaves every spring. I have come to see how possible it is that even doubt itself may be a form of faith. The mind does not always move in

straight lines. But if it did, may it not be true that straight lines are impossible in a universe of circles? The mistake may be in thinking that there are any straight lines. Even a diameter is limited by the circumference. Teachers recognizing diversities of constitution and temperament will make a difference between one doubter and another—"on some have compassion, making a difference"—but they must always meet sincerity with patience, and not allow themselves to see perdition in every troubled or even hostile inquiry. Our cross-examiners may be only feeling their way to the Rock and the Altar.

What is to be our answer to those who are always calling out for some new thing even in religion? The call may not be frivolous. Even newness is not necessarily despicable. It is not unreasonable, however, if any good use is to be made of the past, to meet newness with some degree of suspicion. It has sometimes falsified its own credentials. Yet a householder should bring out of his treasure things new and old. May I venture upon the paradox that only the old can be the really new? Your house is new, but how old is the earth on which it is built? Your furniture is new, but how old was the walnut wood

out of which it was cut? And what is our hoary "old" compared with the true antiquity? The gray old minster on which centuries have written their cipher is of yesterday compared with the rock out of which it was cut and on which it rests. Or if the newness that is admired and desiderated partakes of the nature of what is called "originality," the same remark applies. Originality is always on the road to commonplace. It is on the commonplace that we live. Life feeds on bread. The unique is only the universal brought to a point. This is so with personality. You and I and the common multitude make Shakespeare possible. If all men were Shakespeares there would be no Shakespeare. If all plains were mountains there would be no mountains. The hill is only the valley as high up as it can get. You would be surprised how poor the bust looks when it is taken off the pedestal. All this applies to doctrine. All this is a reply to the clamor for originality. Notwithstanding the modern prophets and yesterday's untested inspiration, I do not believe in new doctrines. I believe in new ways of combining the seven notes, but I am not sure that an eighth note has been discovered. Other Handels and Bee-

thovens will arise, but the seven notes abide forever, ready to respond in new obedience to new masters. New illustrations we should welcome: new doctrines we should suspect. In comparing old things with new it is but common justice to remember that all the Christian miracles, by which I now mean all the wonders of home and foreign evangelization, were wrought by the old doctrines and the men who were prepared to die for them. I put in the history of missions as evidence. I never heard of a new hypothesis founding a missionary society. The men who believed in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, in heaven and hell, in verbal inspiration and in eternal punishment, proved their faith by their works. They may have been intellectually misguided, but they were faithful and noble to the point of self-sacrifice, and we who think they were mistaken have entered into their labors, and ought to be their grateful debtors forever.

Can we take an optimistic view of the present Christian outlook? Has not Christianity had its day, and has it not gone down as a sun that is set? Yes. It has gone down precisely in that way. I am not

aware that when the sun has gone out of sight it has gone out of existence. I believe that the bright view is the only full view, and therefore the only true view. The danger is that we be tempted to draw large conclusions from a very limited number of facts, and to forget that under the law of advance there is a law of retrocession and modification. The movement of God is not to be judged in inches. Not even in centuries. It is to be judged, as we have seen, by the first verse of the Bible. We have examined it and found all the guarantees there. The creating God is the perfecting God—is so, not poetically, but by the very necessity of his own attributes. In the evolution of Christian history we undoubtedly come upon eras of barrenness and we pass through zones of storm. But we must take in more horizon if we would judge wise judgment, and the details we must leave to the Master; he will shape them and correct them, and rule them into his beneficent economy. If we would work more and manage less, our rest would be less scared by ill-bred dreams. Work helps faith. Faith is ever calm. Upon what are we standing? Are we standing upon the work of man or upon the Word of God—

upon a resolution that can be amended, or upon an Oath that is unchangeable? There can be no difficulty in proving from its own contents and its own spirit that the Bible is distinctly optimistic. From first to last the outlook is bright. The serpent can hurt the heel only, but the bruised heel is to crush the serpent's head. The name of Christ is always associated with triumph; true or untrue, fact or fiction, the Bible contemplates nothing but victory.

“ I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

“ When Christ ascended up on high he led captivity captive.”

“ Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.”

We are not now discussing the truth of these views. Our one point is that from first to last the Bible sees nothing but victory; and the continuousness of that foresight, considering the incessant and tremendous action of the book, is itself an argument. I cannot give up the logical value of that significant fact. If one writer only had been jubilant and the

others had been despairing, the value of the argument would have been destroyed. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent" would seem to be the heroic declaration which the Bible sets itself to make good. If the whole Bible had been the work of one man, the value of the argument would have sunk immensely. But the Bible is the work of many men, in many places, and in many centuries, yet its tone never varies, its courage never declines, and that fact, which can be tested by any reader, I claim not as a fact only, but as an argument that cannot be shaken. Truly, there is sorrow enough in the Bible, but it is the kind of sorrow essential to perfect joy. True, also, that the Bible is a record of conflict and hostility—the very history of perdition itself—in a sense quite as much a revelation of the devil as of God—but the enemy is dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel: "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever;" "he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." The Bible does not ignore the tragedies which convulse and darken the human story—this is no blind optimism that tints the sky with hectic colors—the



whole horror is realized, and in the ghastly presence of sin's vast havoc the Apostle exclaims, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The grace is not overborne by the sin, the sin is overborne by the grace. I claim this, then, as an argument set in many lights and reasoned by many minds, yet ending in the vindication of one law and in the coronation of one Personality.

The optimism of the Bible is to be the optimism of the Church and all its ministries. This is to be the spirit of our service. We are saved by hope. We are inspired by hope. We build in hope. Under the influence of this assurance of final triumph we shall remember in all our work that there are other people in the world besides infidels and objectors. It has for a long time seemed to me that for any man to build his ministry upon the supposition that he is going to convert infidels by answering their objections and removing their difficulties is to adopt a policy which must end in disappointment. That special arrangements may be made for this kind of service is another matter. I am speaking of the purpose and staple of the Christian ministry. Infidelity may soon exalt itself into a profession. To

some men infidelity may be the only possible distinction. I seriously doubt whether an infidel can even ask a question in a right spirit, and in Christian inquiry the right spirit is everything. If I may not say that the Bible is the Word of God because the infidel will at once draw my attention to a hard verse, neither may I tell him that prayer is answered, because he will at once tell me that many a prayer for safety has been followed by shipwreck, and many a prayer for recovery has been followed by bereavement. Neither may I tell him that God rules the world, or he will at once point me to still harder verses in human life. And who is this wonderful man the infidel, that he should plant himself in mid-stream and divert the current of Christian teaching as he pleases? What are his credentials? Is he greater than the apostles, the pastors, and the missionaries whom we have known? Is their inspiration less than his no-inspiration? I boldly deny this man's right to be heard when the question is one of preaching the gospel to every creature. It is our business to preach the gospel. We have a message, and we must deliver it. Nor must we be affrighted by any lion in the way. But to do his work well, the min-

ister must take great care that he himself is not an infidel. A formal infidel of course he cannot be. An insincere and self-seeking teacher he surely cannot be. Yet unbelief or half-belief or doubting belief may chill his very heart, may even spoil the delivery of the most correct verbal message. My meaning can hardly be mistaken. It is to the effect that the messenger must believe his own message if he is to expect other people to believe it. Notwithstanding his belief, they may reject it, yet will not their blood be required at the watchman's hand? Working as if the victory were assured, with what thrilling enthusiasm will the preacher preach! In his soul there is a whisper, "The Lord will suddenly come to his temple." He remembers the prophecy, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." He answers the promises with loving desires and burning prayers—"Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down!" "Make no tarrying, O my God!" "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Thus the messenger has secret communion with his Lord, and many a love-token passes between them. Saith the Lord, "Behold, I come quickly;" saith the messenger,

“Come, Lord Jesus, come.” The descending Lord says, “Surely I come quickly ;” the listening servant answers, “Thou art fairer than the children of men ; . . . make haste, my Beloved.” Thus the holy work is done in hope. The issue is not dependent upon the will of man. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” Great mountains may stand in the way, but before Zerubbabel they shall be leveled into plains. We are not struggling in a forlorn cause. There is no need of the cheer which comes from tabulated statistics. We take our stand upon the oath of God, and in that oath we see, as if it were an accomplished fact, a world reconciled and a Saviour satisfied.

We shall, however, soon lose our hope if we exchange regeneration for reformation. Christ is a Regenerator, not a Reformer. The reformer works by program ; the Regenerator works by the silent, subtle, infinite power of God the Holy Ghost. No wise man despises reforms ; no Christian man is satisfied with them. As effects they are good ; as causes they are impotent. But a program of reforms is most tempting alike to impatience and ambition. Man wants the visible and the immediate,

and this he foolishly thinks is being practical. We are hindered by the very Word we worship. Spiritual men should be most sparing and careful in the use of secular terms in relation to their special work. With the word "practical" as a primary term we have nothing to do. Our doctrine is spiritual. Our submission, I will use a stronger word and boldly say our contention, is that only the metaphysically right is the practically good. Only the metaphysically right is Eternal. "Make the tree good and the fruit will be good." This accounts for the slowness of Christ's work and its thoroughness. The reformer can move at once. His work is useful. I am not attempting to deny it. But his work is superficial, or limited, or temporary, or circumstantial. It is exactly otherwise with the work of Christ. "Your time is always ready," said Christ, "mine hour is not yet come." The man who has to make a ladder can bind himself under penalty to do it within a certain time; but the man who undertakes to grow a tree is in a different position. A tree may be trained very much as you please; but a mind must be consulted and studied. A coat may be made: a character has to be developed. How easy to clothe a

body; how hard to clothe a mind! These illustrations may in some degree indicate the difficulty, because the inwardness and the spirituality, of the work of Christ. And as is the work of Christ so is the work of his ministers. It is not a reforming work, a social work, a political work, a controversial work; it is all this and more, and only this because it *is* more. An atheist may be an advocate of sanitation. A profane swearer may be an expert in questions as between capital and labor. A man may be a temperance reformer and never open a Bible. I purposely put the matter thus broadly that I may make the uniqueness of specifically Christian work the more obvious and impressive. Ministers are inspired by the Holy Ghost, and separated by the Holy Ghost, to do a work that cannot be confused or mingled with any other kind of work. When they lose their distinctiveness they not only lose their power, they lose the very reason of their existence. Forgetting this, they have, in some instances, nearly wrecked their true influence. And consider how great that true influence ought to be! It should be a terror to evil-doers. Bad men would soon be made to feel that every act was under holy criticism and that the

very air was alive with judgment. The witness of God would express itself through the testimony of ministers. The poor, the broken-hearted, the wronged, and the down-trodden would soon be made to understand that their Redeemer liveth. We must get back, then, to the metaphysical, back to the spiritual, back to the Holy Ghost.

“ We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.”

“ By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

“ My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

“ Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”

In thus giving Christ his proper function as a Regenerator we shall know exactly how to define and qualify the doctrine which has grown around the word Christocentric. Properly defined, there is no

objection to the word, yet it may be most deceitful and misleading. Christ must not be at the center in the sense of a bust surrounded by floral tributes. Then he would be a mere idol. He must be at the center in a living, commanding, inspiring sense. Not that alone. Infinitely more than that. He must prove his right to be there. And to be there is no man's right. Only God can be there with adequate right. The position would overweigh and overwhelm any man. Yet Christ must be there. And if there, why? Because of his quality, his resources, his doctrine, his majesty, his Godhead! To my consciousness Jesus Christ is the Incarnate God not because of some Greek preposition or some recondite point in Greek syntax. If grammar created his deity, grammar might destroy it. To me he is God incarnate because of what he is in himself, and not because of what he is even in the estimation of his worshipers. If, therefore, we gather around him not as an idol, not as a figure of extreme dignity and loveliness, but as the Incarnate God, the term Christocentric, though pedantic and affected, may not be objectionable, in some cases it may even be temporarily useful. But its deceitfulness is obvious. It



may conceal a deep disloyalty. It may go no farther than admiration. It may only mean applause, it may not express the highest conception of worship. The poet has his "society," the philosopher has his devotees, but Christ, as God the Son, must be hailed as Lord and God, and adored as the Infinite Saviour of the world. How is the reality of this worship to be proved? May it not be a mere sentiment? May even prayer be other than emotion rhetorically expressed? Here, again, as ever—a continuousness which amounts to a revelation and an argument—we come upon the law and the test of strenuous discipline. Our worship must be tried by rack and thumb-screw; our prayers must be passed through the fire. "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Christocentric does not mean self-considering:

"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

"Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

“ Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.”

If by Christocentric we mean such devotion and such discipline, it becomes but a new verbal description of an old and unchanging process.

It is here that I find a standing-place, a rock, amidst the bogs and the quicksands of this century of self-assault and self-rectification on the part of Christian believers. It is not at all discouraging, indeed it may be the exact contrary, that Christians are overhauling their own books and arguments. And inasmuch as the overhauling leads to no cessation of Christian activity, but if possible to an increase of apostolic service, it is safe to infer that they themselves conclude that no central position has been shaken. A broad distinction must be drawn between men who assail the Bible because they are hostile to its moral teaching and men who believe that the moral teaching would be better understood if the historical and critical position were better defined. These men are our friends and helpers; we must therefore honor and guard their spotless reputation;

and this we can do without being able to accept all their suggestions and conclusions. My present feeling is that some of them in moving at all have either gone too far or they have not gone far enough. I could have understood them better if they had not claimed any exceptional inspiration for the Bible, for to me inspiration is more than spiritual genius, it is sovereign and divine authority. There are two positions, outside the orthodox view, which might be maintained intelligibly and effectively.

*First:* A man may say that, without making any claim whatever for the Bible, he simply finds in it many things that are most pathetic and beautiful, and he values them on their merits. He neither knows nor cares to know who wrote the Bible: he reads it as a collection of books and judges it as its contents may vary. This man has no theory of inspiration.

*Second:* A man may say that inspiration comes and goes; the Bible was inspired; it was at the time all that the most orthodox have claimed for it, but

now it is displaced, in the higher education, by the Holy Ghost.

This second view might be profitably examined by Christian believers. It is more than possible that the Holy Ghost may have been, unintentionally in many instances, ignored and dishonored. Is it not possible that the Bible, regarded simply as a book, may have done all that it was ever intended to do, and according to the law "first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual," may it not now disappear, except as a historical record, and give place to the Living Spirit, the very Spirit which, in the opinion of many, dictated and inspired its messages? I find no difficulty in seeing that such an inquiry may be conducted in the most reverential and obedient spirit. As a matter of fact, displacement or supersession has been the law of the Bible itself. This I regard as a key which might be largely used. Sacrifices have been displaced: ritual has been superseded: "the first tabernacle was a figure for the time then present" (Heb. ix. 9), and was displaced "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands": the law was only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of

the things": "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment": miracles are no longer known as in New Testament times: the Saviour himself has ascended up on high, "yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16): we cannot deny this law of displacement. Sometimes we call it the law of growth. The man displaces the child. The fruit displaces the blossom. Experience displaces ignorance. Who, then, shall say that the Bible, considered as a book, may not be displaced by the Spirit who wrote it by the hands of men? But by what test should we then know ourselves to be of the divine seed? "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John iv. 13). But how do we know that the living Christ is in our hearts the hope of glory? "Hereby know we that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John iii. 24). "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16). But can we be perfectly sure that we have realized our forgiveness and received the seal from God? "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in

himself" (1 John v. 10). In view of all the facts thus set forth I am quite prepared to believe that the Church may be passing through a transition in regard to the exact place of the Bible in Christian education, nor can I call those men infidels or enemies who have entered into such deep communion with the Spirit that the book is no longer, as a book, what it was when they first believed. For my own part I still need the book, and I need the Spirit to interpret it. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). I am willing to bear all the reproach of the old faith if I may be permitted to keep the book to whose messages I owe my very soul. All that I know of Jesus I learned from the Bible. It has been a lamp to my feet ever since I accepted its teaching. When all other books have forsaken me the Bible has been to me sweeter than honey, yea, than the honeycomb.

I deliver this testimony the more earnestly because it helps to account for a fact which is not always understood. That fact is the supposed narrowness of men who cannot at once surrender an old friend

for a new theory. I am one of those men. The propounders of theories that are novel even if true will immensely increase the value of their theories by being patient with those who ask for time to examine them. Epithets are not always convincing. Why should we be called narrow, bigoted, unprogressive, and superstitious? We think we have a vindication—sometimes that vindication is a memory, or an experience, or an emotion, or a conviction; but whatever it is, we think an answer better than a sneer. Those who sneer at our narrowness should remember our training. We think we owe more to the Bible than we owe to them. For the present, speculation is subordinate to gratitude. But we had really come to love the Bible, greatly as we may have been mistaken. We did not love it thoughtlessly; our love was based upon reason. When we were poor, the Bible spoke to us as if it knew exactly our emptiness and destitution, and it bade us be of good cheer and to fix our expectation upon God. When the little child came into the house, Jesus Christ spoke to us about it, took it up in his arms and blessed it; and when the little child died that same Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come unto

me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven ; ” and as we tremblingly placed it in his arms he smiled upon us, and said something about “ a little while. ” The Bible has been very precious to us. I know not what the house would have been without it. The print was so large that we could read it in the dark. The message was so good that it soothed our weariness and lay like balm upon the heart that was ill at ease. In such hours men knew as if by an inspired instinct what a book really is. It was in such hours that we first truly read the Bible. And as we read the psalm, the prophecy, the song, we pressed the Bible to our hearts and called it the Word of God. Be patient, therefore, with us if we cannot all at once change our point of view and modify our appreciation. We do not mean to be “ narrow, ” but we do mean to be just. A life-long love implies a long process of eradication. We must try the spirits whether they be of God. We are not afraid of light. We have no fear of progress. We pray for the expansion and sanctification of scholarship. True criticism will rob us of no promise, and in no degree will it spoil our heritage or vex our peace. But do not call us “ narrow ” even if we think every



word in the Bible came directly out of heaven from God. So much did come from him that we supposed it must all have come. Perhaps we approached the Bible more from the point of sympathy than from the point of criticism. Take away from it, if you can, all its literal errors, and rectify all its historical mistakes, you will, I know, as Christian scholars be just as anxious as the humblest believer to guard the tree of life and magnify the love of Christ.

## VII.

### NOTES AND COMMENTS.

O THOU LIVING ONE, tender and strong beyond all thoughts of mine, I feel great need of Thee just now. I am about to differ from men who serve Thee night and day, and whose love and zeal put my poor work to shame. May my words be well chosen lest they should wantonly offend those who love Thee with entireness of heart. May I mock the argument without mocking the man. Spirit of the gentle Christ, make me gentle! Spirit of truth, make me sincere!

**M**ANY books now in circulation are, perhaps unduly, and certainly without intention, troubling people who have been zealously, and some think ignorantly, holding on to the old form of truth without question and without doubt. I am far from sure that such people should read the kind of books I

refer to, and quite as far from sure that such books should be offered for public sale. To experts they may be useful: to others they may do much temporary harm. For example, Mr. Horton says in his preface to "Revelation and the Bible": "This book pretends to be nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions." Then was it wise to offer it for miscellaneous sale? An author cannot limit his responsibility in this way. His own intention may be perfect, and in a large degree may be defensible, but after publication he is only one party in the case. What does the Church, taken as a whole, young and old, trained and untrained, want with "a series of tentative suggestions"? Is not this an unsatisfactory kind of "reconstruction"? Who can have any sense of safety in living in a house which is "nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions"? Who would care to travel by a time-table that is "nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions"? Such suggestions offered to experts or specialists may be useful; can they do any real good to the rank and file of the Christian Church? The title-page offers "an attempt at reconstruction": the preface promises "nothing more than a series of tentative sugges-

tions." I cannot accept that estimate of the book. In parts it seems to me to be anything but tentative—it appears, in fact, to be definite, even dogmatic, and here and there to be almost contemptuous in its view of an elder school. After reading Mr. Horton's book what will the ordinary Christian reader have in place of the old Bible? Mr. Horton himself says he will have "nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions." Is the exchange worth making? Or does the author mean that the "tentative suggestions" refer only to points of criticism and history? If so, is it not a book for experts only? And if for experts only, was it wise to send it broadcast over the whole Church? The author designates the view which he opposes, with undoubted sincerity and often with most pathetic eloquence, "the unproved assumptions of the orthodox tradition," and his own view he describes as "nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions." What is the exact difference between "unproved" and "tentative"? And what is a man profited if he exchange "assumptions" for "suggestions"? If "tentative," what is the length of the lease? And when the lease is held by two holders, which of them has the sole right

to give it up? These inquiries become important when it is considered that the subjects affect spiritual education. We are "reconstructing" the Bible: we are not editing a private letter. On the title-page of "*Verbum Dei*" Mr. Horton quotes a sentence from Hermann Schultz to the effect that a living religion has prophets, and a dead or unknown religion has only writings or documents. Thus distinguished names are not always associated with very original remarks. When Mr. Horton offers "nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions," I recall a sentence from a still more distinguished German, even from Goethe himself, who says: "If a man sets out to write a book, let him put down only what he knows—I have guesses enough of my own."

Some of Mr. Horton's epithets in "*Verbum Dei*" were perhaps hastily chosen. They are not like himself in tone. As applied to men who take what is called the old view I cannot commend them. Here are specimens: careless (p. 103), thoughtless (p. 104), loose and careless (p. 106), sleek (p. 106), unthinking (p. 107), baseless (p. 107), inexact and inappropriate (p. 113). I should have thought that the author

would have looked upon "sleek" as ecclesiastical slang and would have avoided it, for no man can be daintier than he in his use of words. The point is principally important as indicating a spirit. The spirit of contempt is not the spirit of scholarship. Nor is it the spirit of reconstructive criticism. Nor is it the spirit of Christ. In his preface Mr. Horton prays "that this little volume may come to his brothers in the ministry with a genuine message from God." Which brothers? The "careless," "thoughtless," "sleek," "unthinking," and "inexact"? Then will his circulation be large or small? We must not think men "sleek" because they differ from us. A man may take even Mr. Horton's view and yet not be "careless." We should give each other credit for good faith all around.

Mr. Horton states this view:

"If the teacher is ignorant of God's more recent utterances the world will not unnaturally suppose that his authority on the more ancient utterances is open to question."

But that is exactly what the world says about the Bible! Men say quite freely, If the Bible is wrong in facts, what guarantee have we that it is right in morals? If we answer, The Bible treats of morals and not of facts, the retort is that we are begging the question; we are undertaking to support a *post hoc*; we are special pleaders. But is Mr. Horton prepared to have his rule, if I may so call it, applied to himself? Let us see. The very first sentence in "Verbum Dei" opens thus:

"When the invitation came to me to cross the Atlantic and deliver the *Lyman Abbott* Lecture on Preaching," etc.

But no such invitation ever came to him, ever could come to him! There is no *Lyman Abbott* Lecture on Preaching! Here is a man describing other men as "careless," "thoughtless," "unthinking," and "inexact," and yet the first sentence in the very book which contains these epithets is itself a misstatement of fact! If we are at liberty to say that a man who cannot state a fact cannot state a doctrine, or that a man who does not know the

modern cannot speak authoritatively upon the ancient, what shall we do with a book which begins with a mistake? And not a mistake about some other man, but a mistake about the author himself! He writes the mistake, prints the mistake in italics, dates the mistake, and signs the mistake, and hopes that the book which opens with the mistake will come to his brothers in the ministry with a genuine message from God! The mistake is made the more glaring by the author describing other men and their views as careless, thoughtless, loose, unthinking, baseless, inexact,\* and inappropriate! The mistake may have been corrected in other editions, but that is not the point. If Mr. Horton had died, as Ezra did, the mistake would never have been corrected by his own hand. We do not allow Ezra to publish a second edition, revised, corrected, amended, and annotated! This instance, probably of a mere slip of the pen or a momentary lapse of memory, must not be brought up against the whole line of a man's ministry, or what ministry could stand? At the same time it is a striking illustration of the possibility that in the act of stating a simple matter of personal history, meant to be absolutely literal and



real, a man may commit an almost incredible mistake. We should be careful how we call other men "inexact." "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

I knew a minister who made an idol of Accuracy, who had to be drawn out of many a pit even on the Sabbath day.

In "Verbum Dei" (p. 46) the author says:

". . . It would be misleading indeed if we were to argue from the conversation between Abraham and the Lord concerning the destruction of Sodom that we to-day may expect to hold a conversation in that form."

Why? What is to render it impossible? If it ever did occur, why may it not occur again? But why trouble about Abraham when the Higher criticism has proved that there never was such a person? Abraham was a tribe or an ideal; anything but a literal or historical individual. The Higher criticism tells a man that he may as certainly commune with

God as Abraham ever did, and when he accepts the comforting doctrine he is told by the same criticism that no such man as Abraham ever lived! That Abraham was an eponymous hero! Only eighteen pages further on (p. 64) the author says: "The word of the Lord comes to men to-day just as it came to the prophets of Israel." Then why need the particular "form" be any difficulty in the Lord's way? Has the Lord discontinued the form of dialogue? Is it all mythical? I claim that there are circumstances under which a myth may be the only possible fact. I further claim that even a myth may be a divine instrument, and a Vision itself may be an Incarnation. We must not think that even if the four Gospels are mythical we have got rid of them. Possibly the literal is only the pedestal on which the ideal must stand. What if men themselves be only masks or myths or visions or shadows, or modes of consciousness, awaiting revelation and the heavenly house? We talk sometimes of the Bible writers as if they were original authors, or as if they had a consciousness apart from their subject. I find no present difficulty in taking a different view of the matter. From my standpoint the man himself—

Abraham or Jeremiah, Ezra or Paul—is a revelation, perhaps he himself is the revelation! We seem to argue, not always by intention, that man is quite an independent actor and that he works out his own will in his own way. Not from my point of view. I believe that God may turn mistakes into channels of revelation. I believe that God may inspire a man to make literary mistakes, that by so doing man may learn his proper place and starve his pride by eating the dust of humiliation. How much does every wise man owe even to his blunders! How much does civilization owe to the hard soil and blunt tools! I do not expect my meaning to be universally perceived. I am endeavoring to show that man does not always know what he is doing; that God may turn man's wrath to his own praise and may restrain the remainder; yea, that God may cause our mistakes, our infirmities, our vanities, and our lapses to fall out to the furtherance of the gospel. Never let sovereignty be modified. Never let sovereignty slip from the divine grasp. It brings us face to face with appalling mysteries; yet otherwise we should be plunged into despair. I cannot now reconcile much that I see around me with the exercise of divine

sovereignty, yet that sovereignty is my one hope of ultimate illumination and harmony.

Mr. Horton says (p. 150), "The Bible begins with a Poem of Creation." Who told him so? All writers have not taken this view. Which of them, if any, has the right to decide, in a way which quietly ignores all the others, what it is? Even histories, as we all know, may be written in poetry. What if the Bible itself is a Poem from beginning to end? What if the poet alone can understand it? Not the rhymester, but the poet, the man whose heart-eyes are wide open? And what if the men who know all about syntax and Chaldean cosmogony and the clay tablets of Assurbanipal be the only men who can never understand the Bible? It would be quite in harmony with much that we know of Providence if God were to do without them and send meaner men upon his errands. It is wonderful how much good God has done through ignorant men, blundering, ungrammatical, unphilosophical men, and wonderful how he has now and then touched some poor hearts even by "Mesopotamia." Collecting, as far as I can, the records of great preachers, evangelists, and

missionaries, I have been astounded how much good has been done by earnest men who probably never heard of the clay tablets of Assurbanipal; and quite as astounding has it been to me to find so little set down to the credit of the men who discovered the tablets, and deciphered their meaning. Far from having any prejudice against such men, I heartily wish them long life and great joy in Babylon. I am thankful that some men are so constituted that they could not be happy without clay tablets. I think the world owes a good deal to them, yet I am by no means sure that they know anything about Revelation. They may, however, know a good deal about it, but their spiritual knowledge is not the result of their Assyriology.

One of my difficulties with present-day biblical criticism is that in many cases the critics are theoretically on one side and practically on the other. They repudiate the idea that the Bible is the Word of God, and yet in other sentences they are willing that it should be substantially regarded as such. Mr. Horton says (*"Verbum Dei,"* p. 104): "I say there is no foundation in the Bible itself for the com-

mon practice of speaking of it as the Word of God." But Mr. Horton says in "Revelation and the Bible," p. 12: "On the whole, it is perhaps safest to cling, at least provisionally, to the idea that all Revelation is really the revealing of God." Before this, on p. 10, he says: "They, too, are not far wrong who speak of the Bible as the Book of God, though of course it is a term foreign to the Bible itself." And yet in "Inspiration and the Bible" (preface, p. 10) he says: "I hardly know an argument waged at the present day on the Secularist platforms which does not derive all its cogency from the false impression which we have ourselves given about the nature and claim of the Bible." He describes those who say that the Bible is the Word of God as careless, thoughtless, unthinking, loose, and inexact, and then he says they are not far wrong who speak of the Bible as the Book of God. If this title is "foreign to the Bible," why use it? I do not understand the position. The mischief is that there is great danger of forming some sort of double conscience. I do not say that this danger besets other minds; I only say that in my own case the danger would be extreme. A striking instance of what I mean by the

dual method, or the method of apparently being on both sides, is given in "Verbum Dei":

<p>"The unthinking dogma of orthodoxy that the Bible as such is the Word of God," etc., p. 107.</p>		<p>"The Bible itself is in so unique and peculiar a sense the Word of God," etc., p. 155.</p>
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The ground would be much clearer if the followers of modern criticism could say: Here is a very old book called the Bible: in every sense it is a most remarkable book: it abounds in narratives, allegories, visions, misstatement, self-contradictory stories, beautiful reflections, brilliant prophecies, and splendid conceptions: who wrote it, when it was written, for what purpose it was written, are points upon which opinion is strongly divided; still it is a wonderful book, and we think it may, if read in the spirit of present-day inspiration, be used with great advantage in the spiritual training of the soul. It seems to me that this is substantially what modern criticism comes to. It is the position of rationalism. That rationalism is certainly neither flippant nor profane, nor is it inconsistent with a reverent theory of present-day inspiration.

Mr. Horton zealously maintains his faith in revelation. Upon that point he is definite and in a manner passionate. Yet every single book in the canon is wrong in some point or feature; in some instances palpably and ridiculously wrong; not a single book as orthodoxy has immemorially accepted it is left without some degree of challenge; dates are wrong; chronology is wrong; genealogies are wrong; authorships are wrong; grammar is wrong; quotation is wrong; and yet the Bible contains a revelation. Mr. Horton's estimate of the Apostle Paul would once have been accounted scandalous. Even now, in face of all changes, I find it impossible to accept it. A few quotations will make my meaning clear:

“To suppose that there is any Divine revelation in the command to bring the cloke, and the book, and especially the parchments . . . is a *reductio ad absurdum*,” etc.

I cannot at this moment see any absurdity in the claim. Providence is manifold. There is a revelation of providence as well as of redemption. I want



to see God in little things as well as in great. I want God to reveal himself through apostolic necessity and the by-ways and conditions of apostolic life. I really do not see the absurdity, and therefore I cannot join in the somber mirth.

“When we turn from the mere human elements in St. Paul’s writings,”

I “boldly challenge” Mr. Horton to point out where the Apostle Paul calls himself “St. Paul.” Where does he “claim” to be St. Paul?

“to his actual mistakes,”  
etc.

This is definite. Now we wait for examples, and Mr. Horton responds:

“No one, for example, can study carefully the use which he makes of the Old Testament without observing the inexactness of his quotations and the interpretation, often quite unjustified by the

original context, which he puts upon the venerable words.”

I protest against the large and easy assumptions. Paul I know, but some of his critics I do not know. According to this criticism Paul quotes inexactly and interprets unjustifiably. Then at what points is he to be trusted? Mr. Horton would answer: Come to Christ; receive his Spirit and you will know. But have not our old teachers come to Christ? Have they not received the Holy Ghost? Have they been teaching us in darkness? Has the true light been withheld until to-day? Again:

“To quote him (Paul) as an exegete of the ancient Scriptures would be obviously absurd.”

Why obviously? Why prefer Mr. Horton to the Apostle Paul, “an Hebrew of the Hebrews”? I do not say that he is not preferable, I only ask for some reason for establishing the preference. In other qualifications Mr. Horton would decline rivalry; why challenge it on the ground of correctly inter-

preting the ancient Scriptures? Take another instance:

“ But the most striking of the mistakes into which the Apostle, owing to the necessary limitations of the most inspired teachers, fell, was the conviction that the Parousia, or second coming of the Lord, was to be in that generation.”

And yet some well-instructed men have contended that the Parousia is an accomplished fact! They may be right or they may be wrong, yet that is their contention, and they have supported it with much learning and argument. The expression with which I am chiefly concerned is—“ the most striking of the mistakes ” of the Apostle; implying that the mistakes are not a few, but that at one point he excels himself in the misinterpretation of providence. The calm and easy manner in which Mr. Horton snubs the whole Bible—regarding it as a literary compend—will not convey to those who do not know him a proper impression of his genuine modesty. Even to

those who do know him, and hold him in honor for his works' sake, it must appear remarkable how he can traverse the whole field of biblical revelation, find fault with every writer, correct every writer's blunders, misinterpretations, and general stupidity, snub the apostles, and tell the evangelists exactly where they go wrong, and dismiss them all as the very clumsiest clerks that ever dipped a pen, but who, on the whole, had a distinct and sublime revelation from God. Mr. Horton may be right. God has most certainly chosen many strange agents, and it may be only another of the mysteries of his providence that he corrects a ministry of blunders by a ministry of disclaimed infallibility. The issue of such a course is the practical abolition of the Bible. To this it must come. The proof we can only find in the coming and going of years. I do not look upon the Apostle Paul as a man who had a kind of mantle of inspiration which he put on and off as occasion required or suggested. I regard him as an inspired MAN; a man who walked not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; he lived and moved and had his being in God; he was of the very body and spirit of the Lord; he fought one fight, kept one faith, served

one cross; his soul was steeped in God; in his speech there were no “mere *obiter dicta*”; in his correspondence there was no mere ornament; the man was crucified with Christ; for him to live was Christ; he counted all things loss for Christ—this is hardly the man whom we care to see charged with “inexact” quotation, “unjustifiable” comment, “irrelevant” application, and glaring “mistakes.” I grieve to say that these epithets and terms are applied by Mr. Horton to the Apostle. If it be asked, Are not all Christians inspired men? I answer, Yes, as to character, as to holiness; but as to gifts and trusts and leaderships I answer, No.

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In “Faith and Criticism,” p. 9, Professor Bennett, who has won a very high reputation as a professor of Old Testament literature and criticism, and who is intensely evangelical in his love of Christ and his belief in the spiritual uses of the Bible, says: “The early Fathers took over from the Rabbis a collection of baseless theories”; but what is the precise critical difference between “a collection of baseless theories” and “a series of tentative suggestions”? I cannot

exactly appraise the difference. The Professor says (p. 20): "We are getting accustomed to hear without any special emotion that in Ruth, Daniel, and Esther a beautiful and instructive fabric has been reared upon a slender historical basis." Is this argument? Is the cessation or abatement of emotion a proof? If so, we must not forget that it painfully applies to the hearing of the gospel itself. But it is not proof; it is not intended as an argument, and in many honorable instances it is not a fact. On p. 26 the Professor says: "The books from Genesis to Chronicles are not so much histories as homilies with a profusion of historical illustration." This would seem to make the matter worse and worse. If the text is false, what can the homily be? If the historical illustration is not reliable, how can any intelligent trust be put in the homily? Suppose a sermon or homily should be preached upon the earthquake which occurred in Italy in 1587; suppose the homily should be rich and pathetic in doctrine and illustration; suppose it should have deeply impressed generations of men in many lands; and suppose that no such earthquake ever occurred in the history of Italy; I fancy that if the preacher offered to preach

a homily upon the great Mexican catastrophe which occurred the year after the earthquake in Italy, he would find his "occupation gone." Men find it as difficult to accept a true sermon from a false text as to discover a straight line in a corkscrew. It will show in part what the Old Testament is coming to if we take another sentence from Professor Bennett's essay, p. 31: "No doubt much that is most characteristic and valuable in Christian thought is found in germ and suggestion in the Jewish Scriptures." I must very earnestly protest against this particular form of putting the case if the New Testament is supposed to represent Christian thought. If the New Testament is not included, I do not see why the remark was made; if it was included, I do not see how it could have been made. The Professor bewilders me by the very next sentence in his essay: "But, through failing to exercise his imagination, the Christian reader often sees a dense forest where there were actually only a few scattered saplings." I think the imagination must have been very vigorously exercised if three or four saplings were multiplied into Bashan or Lebanon. If a man told me that he had seen Mount Sinai when he had only

seen a grindstone, the word "imagination" would instantly occur to me.

The former difficulty, that of a kind of dual position—I would say see-saw position but for fear of being misunderstood—occurs in the case of Professor Bennett. He says (p. 20) that though we are getting accustomed to hear certain things about Ruth, Daniel, and Esther, it would be a very different thing, in the estimation of the Christian public, if Abraham and the patriarchs were called in question. We may infer, then, that Abraham and the patriarchs are quite secure, at least in the estimation of "the Christian public," and inferentially in Professor Bennett's. But on p. 22 the Professor says: "The earliest history of the patriarchs is separated by many centuries from the patriarchs themselves." That puts one nail in their coffin. Still, Abraham remains. Not a hair of his head must be touched. It is something for the Christian public to have retained Abraham. But have we retained him? On the very same page (22) Mr. Bennett says: "Documents of the early monarchy can only shed a dim and uncertain light on the time of Abraham." How



do we know, then, that we are quite sure of Abraham? Does he suffer from the "dim and uncertain light" which settles on his time? Some critics (p. 23) have set forth Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Twelve Patriarchs as personifications and representatives of Israel in the various phases of its early history; they are accounted, Professor Bennett says, "not as historical persons" but "eponymous heroes." So far, therefore, as these particular critics are concerned, even Abraham is not made of much account. Presently we may get accustomed even to his disappearance. Professor Bennett says, however (p. 23), "There are weighty arguments to be waged on the other side." One of these weighty arguments is the assurance of "a distinguished critic" (anonymous) "that when we come to Abraham a true historical instinct tells us that we are dealing with the authentic record of a real historical person." But what about the "some" who made Abraham eponymous? Was the "true historical instinct" not available to them? And, after all, what is this "true historical instinct"? Who has it? Who keeps it? Who dispenses it? This "historical instinct" operates within some sort of circle. This is how Professor Bennett

puts it on p. 24: "The verdict of the historical instinct in favor of Abraham is only conclusive to those whose instincts give the decision." This is fatal. Abraham is turned over to the "historical instinct." If you have the instinct you have Abraham, but in the absence of the instinct Abraham is "as good as dead." I am not sure whether this is Professor Bennett's own opinion. His words are not quite clear to my mind. At this point he distinctly refers to "the Christian public," and perhaps he does not, for the nonce, include the critics, regarding them rather in their professional capacity, and especially regarding them as in advance of "the Christian public," and gradually breaking the surprise with which that public may one day hear that a personal and historical Abraham never existed; that, in fact, he was simply an eponymous hero! Professor Bennett thinks "a general consensus of opinion on the subject, or the agreement of a large majority of historical experts, might enable us to establish the historicity of the narratives on internal evidence alone." But what is the good of telling us of what would happen if we had what is not in existence? But is it not in existence? I have only Professor Bennett's

authority to rest upon. This is his sentence: "But no such consensus or agreement exists" (p. 24). Then where is Abraham? Then what is the position of the Church in relation to the polemical skeptic on the one hand and the devout inquirer on the other? Professor Bennett's answer makes me sad. I give it in his own disheartening words: "The Church must be prepared to find that it cannot at present give an obviously conclusive answer to the polemical skeptic, and even that it cannot always on intellectual ground remove the difficulties felt by devout and earnest inquirers" (p. 24). That is an unhappy position. It is, also, a position which involves a good deal more than is expressed within the limits of its own terms. If neither the polemical skeptic nor the earnest inquirer can be satisfied on this point, how many other points would be included within the same inability? Is Professor Bennett, then, prepared to let the "historicity" of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Twelve Patriarchs go? He is not. He has two sources of encouragement, and I deeply regret that I am unable to avail myself of them. The student has a "sense of the vivid realism of the history of the patriarchs": that is the

first source of encouragement, and the second is the student's "hopes as to the possibilities of future excavations." The second is a poor foundation to rest upon. What if the excavations should turn out the other way? Then what will become of the personal Abraham and the patriarchs? But is there any possibility of the excavations playing us false? This is Professor Bennett's dubious answer: "We are also encouraged to hope for very much from the inscriptions, though the specimens of apologetic evidence already offered from those sources are not encouraging" (p. 23). This would be disquieting enough, but it becomes something like intellectual torment when we read on the very next page, "Critics can scarcely discount for ready money the possibilities of archæological investigation." Where, then, is Abraham, about whose security we thought there was no doubt? Professor Bennett says (p. 25): "The Church will not venture to interpose between the sinner and his Saviour the necessity of arriving at a correct conclusion on the existence of Abraham." Yet Christ made more of Abraham than of any other character in the Old Testament. He names him more frequently and dwells upon him

with more appreciation, and appeals persistently to him in contending with the unbelieving Jews. On p. 29 Professor Bennett seems to join the "some" of p. 23 who look upon Abraham and others as representations and ideals rather than historical individuals. I quote the Professor's own words: "The importance of Abraham and Daniel does not lie in their being unique personages, but in their representing Hebrew ideals, the highest life of Israel." So Abraham, about whom the Christian public might feel so sure, concerning whom "a distinguished critic" said, "A true historical instinct tells us that we are dealing with the authentic record of a real historical personage," now becomes an ideal of the highest life of Israel! His very existence is put negatively by Professor Bennett, who says on pp. 23, 24: "No one will maintain that the existence of Abraham has been disproved, or that the narratives of the patriarchs have no foundation in real history"! Surely Abraham is fast disappearing! Yet Professor Bennett has a singular comfort for us even here; for on p. 29 he says: "If a haze of uncertainty dims the features of Abraham, we see more clearly the simple facts . . . of his children." An ideal man has real

children! A non-historical personage has a large historical family! Now read a little in the light of the "Hebrew ideal" theory:

And an eponymous hero was four score and six years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to the Hebrew ideal. And when an eponymous hero was ninety years old the Lord appeared to him, and the eponymous hero fell on his face, and Jehovah talked with the Hebrew ideal. . . . The eponymous hero fell on his face, and laughed; . . . and the eponymous hero was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin; . . . and the Hebrew ideal sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; . . . and the eponymous hero gat up early in the morning; . . . and the eponymous hero said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister.

For my own part, I cannot follow this reasoning, nor can I believe that it will ever do any spiritual and lasting good. I will go farther and express a wonder whether an ancient document for which no inspiration had been claimed would have been treated in this manner. Are not the critics simply making out a case? Is not their action *ex post facto*? Are

not the critics groping about for some kind of inspiration of which they cannot see any adequate evidence? Why do they not take up a rationalistic position and lecture upon Abraham as they would lecture upon Hector or Ulysses? This painful endeavor to find inspiration, without finding it, would, were the case my own, put my conscience in serious peril. Personally, I should prefer to treat the Old Testament as a very wonderful record which supplied many points of interest upon which a religious mind might profitably meditate. For the present at least I am thankful to be able to take up a very different position. I accept the Old Testament as inspired, notwithstanding any flaws in the human workmanship. To me it is a revelation of God and his Sovereignty, of the Father and his Providence, of the Creator and his Dominion. It is infinitely majestic and solemn. Without God the Holy Ghost it never could have been written. In it I feel the breath and see the very finger of God. I am not dependent in any degree whatever, or for any purpose whatever, upon "tentative suggestions," or "future excavations."

I see more and more that earnest spiritual inquir-

ers should not approach the Bible from the standpoint of experts. Men, regarded in the bulk, are not scholars and specialists. The reading of the Bible might in many cases be regulated as other reading is regulated. It might be useful to tell some people exactly where to begin. It may be that the historical books of the Bible should not be read until the very last. Why not begin with the Parables and the Beatitudes, and work backward? Enter the Bible by the Christ-gate. In this way we could in a sense reconstruct the canon without alarming conservative instincts. Let the Bible be put back again into its several parts, and let those parts be given out according to the age and circumstances of the reader. Give out the Parables as a first lesson; then the Christ Stories; then the history of the Crucifixion; then a selection of the Psalms; then some of the principal biographies. This would not only save many premature inquiries, it might prepare the mind to consider critical points and difficulties in a right spirit. It would certainly put these points in their proper place. It is undoubtedly difficult for some minds, inexperienced and untrained, to confront at once the problem of Creation, the history of the



Fall, and the intricacies of ancient and superseded ritual. There is no spiritual need to begin there. The infinite beauty of the gospel is that a beginning can be made at any point. Why not begin at the point nearest Jesus? What if the original text was meant to be read not only from right to left, but from last to first? What if the Origins should be an answer, not a puzzle? In some such way as this, always variable, I have come into the possession of my own steadfast faith in the Bible. I did not come into it by comparing Chaldean and Hebrew Cosmogony, or reading the clay tablets of Nineveh, or settling the parentage of Jotham, or adjusting the discrepancies as to the period between the birth of Arphacsad and the migration of Abram. These are questions for experts. They are to some minds deeply interesting questions. But I did not find them necessary to salvation. It is quite supposable that a man conscience-stricken on account of sin and directed to the Bible for guidance would impatiently put such questions aside, and almost instinctively find out the portions which bear immediately upon his own necessity. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him under-

standing." My belief in the Divine Sovereignty enables me to recognize guidance even in the selection of passages of Scripture. I see also the possibility of a man so finding Christ, and so accepting the precious gospel of his love, that he would find no difficulty in describing the book to which he owed all his saving knowledge as none other than the Word of God. The title would seem to suit the contents. He would think of those parts of the Book which gave him life and light and pardon and hope. He would rest hard by the cross. He would make his soul glad with the words of Jesus. And if in the end he called the Book none other than the Word of God, I think he might be understood and forgiven.

## VIII.

### AD CLERUM.

[As this book views the subject of Biblical Criticism almost wholly from the standpoint of a preacher, it has occurred to me that a few observations bearing upon Pastoral Theology might be useful. Incidental light may thus be thrown upon practical points. The Christian preacher is largely dependent upon the Bible. Without it what message has he? what unique authority? what standard of appeal? By approaching the Bible from the standpoint of the preacher's actual service we may see how pastoral Experience may become a critic and an annotator.]

**A**RE you very much disheartened just now? Are there no friendly faces shining upon you? Come, then, let us talk together, and let me be your elder brother. I have been just as much cast down as you can possibly be, yet I have lived to sing in the warm light and take the gift of peace from the right hand of Christ. The Saviour clearly saw that his servants would often be in trouble. So he laid up for them a rich store of comfort, one of

### **Discouragements and Oppositions.**

the very first comforts being the lesson that is to be drawn from his own experience. The servant is to be as his Lord. If the Master of the house has been called Beelzebub, how can they who are of his household escape vituperation? Did not the people take up stones to stone him? Did he not go to places that refused to receive him? Had the Son of Man where to lay his head? By thinking these things over I have often received great comfort. My sorrows are nothing to Christ's. He was despised and rejected of men. "He was a reproach of men and despised of the people." The people sneered at his ancestry; they questioned his credentials, saying, "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet;" they said he had an unclean spirit; "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." Now, where are your little troubles? Some man has left your ministry in a resentful spirit; well, what of it? He will show his true colors some day, and the mystery will be made plain. Do your duty; do not be affected by his evil spirit; show by your forbearance what the grace of God has done for you, and then forget the injury and go on steadily with your work. Do not allow yourself to think of re-

sentment. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Your enemy, or his children, will one day come to your door to beg. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." By making a right use of the Bible, in such experiences, you will find, as I have found, how wonderfully it proves itself to be the Word of God. It knows me altogether. It knows exactly what I want. When my sorrow is supreme, it says, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?"

"But people are so ungrateful," you remind me.

Yes; some of them are. But are not some of them grateful? I am always struck with the kindness of people, their love, their sympathy, their patience.

"True; but the people I have done most for are most ungrateful."

Very likely. That has been sadly illustrated in my own experience. But even on that point the Bible gives the best comfort. It would seem, as in the Apostle's case, the more you love some people the less you will be loved.

How wonderfully the Bible meets this very case. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Now will you think your case over from this point of view? If you will, I am sure you will take heart and begin again. Do not give up your work. Write your letter of resignation, and write it very strongly and even vehemently, and then place it most carefully in the middle of the fire, the devil's post-office for the devil's letters. Why should a faithful man be faithless? You were not called to the ministry by the will of man, but by the will of God. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." A minister must have no self. He must be his Lord's loving slave. In such a case his chain is his liberty. What have you or I suffered in comparison with the Apostle Paul? When I think myself ill-treated or wronged in any way I read Paul's record, and become ashamed of my petulance:

"Are they ministers of Christ?  
I am more; in labors more abundant,  
in stripes above measure, in prisons  
more frequent, in deaths

oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Yet we are tempted to resign because some man has given up a pew! I am ashamed of myself when I think of this possibility. What did the Apostle do with all his sorrows, disappointments, sufferings, and infirmities? He turned them to good account. He made capital out of them. Oh, listen to this hero-martyr:

"I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

If we are in the apostolic succession we will do the same. "If I needs must glory, I will glory in the

things which concern mine infirmities." Paul thus made failures into successes. They brought him nearer to his Lord. They helped him toward Gethsemane. "He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Our weakness gives Christ an opportunity to show the power of his grace. He does not always save us from trouble; he always saves us in it. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." That we are "not destroyed" is a proof that we shall be saved. With the Lord, a negative may mean a positive. Are you destroyed? Is your root consumed with fire? Is there no remnant of strength? Let us look to our Lord and expect his incoming to our hearts every moment. "Though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Now read the twenty-third Psalm, and tell me if it is not the Word of God uttered from the human side.



You know that the value of all comfort depends upon the right with which we can claim it. It is not meet to take the children's **Self-Examination** bread and cast it unto the dogs. **Personal.**

We must not be comforted in wrong-doing. "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" I must, then, probe my heart before God. I must not spare myself. The hot iron must go right in. Have I been envious of some other man? Have I sought to injure his reputation, or to modify his influence? Have I been secretly pleased when I have heard that he is not quite so popular as he used to be? And yet have I said how sorry I was that he was not maintaining his position? What wonder if God should chide me, and feed me with the bread of rebuke? My soul was indeed mean, and my breath was corrupt in prayer, yea, my holiest words were bathed in pestilence, and my supplications were weighted with deceit. Is it to be wondered at, then, that God stirred up men against me, and rolled rough stones before my feet? It was righteous judgment. I had shut the door of the sanctuary in my own face, and excluded myself from

the light of love. Or, if I have not sinned in this particular way, have I not sinned after a manner of my own? Have I not burned with unholy passion? Have I no secret altar of illicit worship? Has covetousness perverted love, and seduced motive from its first simplicity? Have I not become entangled in an unprofitable process of self-justification without going to the root of the matter? It is along this line of inquiry that I often find the probable reason of my discouragements and depressions. Other people may have been the visible instruments, but the hostility which they expressed may have been divine. Very rarely does chastisement of this sort begin and end with a personal opponent. The opponent himself may not fully know what he is doing. He may even do it without reluctance. It does the soul no harm to see God himself in all this penal action; on the contrary, it brings the soul to great principles and gives it an opportunity of penitence and confession. Never spare your own soul, or regard yourself as an instance of injured innocence. Self-severity is the way to health. At this point also I have proved the Bible to be the very Word of God. There is no severity like the severity of that Word. "The word

of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). This may or may not technically be the Bible as a mere book, yet it is in that book I find the dividing sword as I find it nowhere else. When the Lord says, "Is not my word like as a fire? and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" my heart can only answer in a solemn and grateful Yes. A favorite figure is that of the sword:

"He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword."—Isaiah xlix. 2.

"Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."—Rev. i. 16.

"Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."  
—Rev. ii. 16.

We may know the Word of God by its severity as well as by its gentleness. It is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It effectually worketh in them that believe. The Word of the Lord is as the Lord himself. "Hell and destruction are before

him; how much more, then, the hearts of the children of men." Are we very much cast down and exceedingly troubled? "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. xvii. 10). That may be the explanation! It finds the reason in myself, and therefore it is likely to be true. I must no longer trifle with myself. "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." What, then, shall I do? Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way? I will arise, and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, "Search me, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Along this line you will find release, and hope, and heaven.

Why do I preach? This is not so simple an inquiry as it seems to be. Have I really a message **Self-Examination Ministerial.** to the people, and is it so urgent that I must deliver it or die? Whose message is it? Is it mine or God's? Is it not partly mine? Say the setting of it in words, and in choosing the words have I not given the prefer-

ence to words which man's wisdom teacheth? Have I not been betrayed by my own cleverness and sordidly delighted with my own originality? But I have been told that I can have as direct a message from God as Jeremiah had, or the Apostle Paul. Is that a fact? Yes and No. God does now certainly communicate with the men who are "called to be saints," but not to the exclusion of other men whom he has chosen, and not at regularly appointed canonical hours. You have to preach in the morning and in the evening and in mid-week, and to do this for ten years, or twenty, or fifty. Never forget that there is an "everlasting gospel" as well as an immediate message—a central fund of truth, public and permanent, as well as the word just dropped from heaven. How could human vanity be more flatteringly besieged than by the temptation that God speaks privately and even secretly to the one man, and that the one man is to be listened to as the oracle of heaven? I believe that even the one man is only really strong as he speaks the common truth, under the common inspiration. We must beware of "another gospel, which is not another," and we must be so deeply attached to the common truth as

to understand the apostolic exhortation: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Paul would not allow any preacher, even himself, to substitute one gospel for another. He was so emphatic upon this point that he repeated it: "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." But was not Paul inspired? Yes. Yet he did not claim what we call originality. He was inspired to "receive" and to "deliver" a great public trust of the Church: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received"—and was it something that he himself, and he alone, received as a personal and direct message in answer to his own individual prayer? He gives the contrary impression by going constantly to "the Scriptures" for his facts and arguments. The doctrine which Paul "received" and "delivered" he states to be:—Christ died: Christ was buried: Christ rose again: Christ was seen: Christ was seen by me. All this is set out in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. That is the doctrine which I have to

receive and deliver. These are the unchanging facts. Personal inspiration may come and go, but the sacred deposit abides. There is a standard truth—an “everlasting gospel.” God will surely visit his servants and reform their faith and grant them larger understanding, but he will not change the foundation—the sure corner-stone—nor destroy the election of his Son.

Am I preaching faithfully? Am I afraid of men's faces? Do I take my income and my worldly position into account? Is my example like a holy fire in the Church, or am I chilled by the indifference of others? I must stretch my very soul upon the rack of these inquiries if I would fight the enemy in the power of God. My humiliation will then be turned into true glory. I shall not be dependent for my comfort or peace upon popular applause. With that applause I shall have no concern. Not what is popular but what is right must be my incessant and fearless inquiry. “Jesus, still lead on.” O my Father, help me in all my vows; nay, do Thou Thyself first form the vows within my heart, then nurture them with Thy grace, and help me to turn them into

life that they may be of use to others also. May I preach the everlasting gospel under the gracious inspiration of the immediate moment, that it may come with great power and tenderness to hearts that are confident in the coming of Thy kingdom. Father, make me a vessel meet for Thine own use.

The Apostle Paul has laid down the subjects of his ministry, and I do not see why I should change them.

**Preaching on the right subjects.** They are great subjects.

They are at once historical and prophetic. Let me slowly repeat them: Christ died: Christ was buried: Christ rose again: Christ was seen: Christ was seen of me. This is the true modernness. The element of personal experience and testimony is essential to true preaching. No matter who else has seen Christ, if I have not seen him myself I cannot preach him. A spectacle to the eyes of my body he may never be, yet he may be the daily vision of my soul. We are told that Paul did not preach on gloomy things, but upon "Jesus and the resurrection." But what does resurrection imply? Resurrection is the last word of a series. Born, Died, Buried, Rose—that is the series, and



every point glows with eternal meaning. I must preach Jesus and the Birth, Jesus and the Death, Jesus and the Burial, if I would intelligently and powerfully preach Jesus and the Resurrection. Death by itself is a poor theme, but death regarded in the light of the Resurrection becomes a servant of the Lord, and to die may be to partake as of a holy sacrament. Death is now no more death. It is not the old servitude to law. It is obedience, vivified by hope. It is necessity, with consent. I must, then, follow the Apostle's commanding example and preach on great subjects. They will lift the ministry to its right level. They will bring in that element of majesty which does not consist in pomp of words or gorgeousness of metaphor, but in a solemn and subduing consciousness of the Supernatural, as if God filled the air and placed his almightiness at our disposal. We shall know the nearness of God by the obliteration of ourselves; by our sense of unworthiness; by our eagerness to bless others; by our hatred of sin. The tests are many and perfect. The very greatness of his themes will drive a minister to prayer. Let him discourse upon some small theme, and he feels that he can handle it without help. Let

him face Eternity, and he will close his eyes in humble supplication! Woe to the minister who thinks he can handle all themes with ease, and woe to the church whose minister he is! Woe, also, to the minister who thinks that the Cross is an old theme and that everything possible has been said about it. That is a fatal error. The Cross is the oldest and the newest of themes. They who know it best see in it a new glory every day. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "To me to live is Christ." "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Still the "me," always the "me," necessarily the "me also." "I live, yet not I."

Is it at all short of criminal for any man to preach doctrines which affect the very foundations of char-  
**Preaching founded** acter and the remotest issues of  
**on Authority.** human life without being able to test their truth except by his own supposed inspiration? Who is the preacher? Who sent him? Who gave him his word? Every other teacher has a basis. Every other teacher has his book of evi-

dences. Why should the preacher alone have a license bearing no signature but his own? Every other teacher has a book not of his own writing. What is the sky but a book? What is the earth but a book? What is unwritten daily life but a book? How foolish, then, it is to speak of Christianity as a book-religion. Science is a book-science. The only superstition that has no book is Agnosticism, and it has no book because it has no science and no religion. Agnosticism is a cipher shutting out everything and inclosing nothing. It is an impertinence hardly less than profane for a man to base his preaching upon nothing but his own variable and capricious inspiration. Even bibliolatry may be preferable to self-deification. The authority of the Christian preacher is the Inspired Word. His ministry is founded upon a revelation. His sermon is modern: his gospel is everlasting; his illustrations are a thousand: his Message is one. As a minister I must found myself upon the Bible. What it is to others I know not; to me it is the abiding and unchangeable Word of God. Revelation is at once the guarantee and the test of true inspiration. "Try the spirits whether they are of God." "Of your own

selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." To every Timothy I would affectionately say: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Preach the Word." "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." These oracles are declared by the apostles to be "the word of this salvation" (Acts xiii. 26), "the word of faith" (Rom. x. 8), "the word of life" (Phil. ii. 16), "the engrafted word which is able to save your souls" (James i. 21). If any man ask Christian ministers to produce their authority, let them gratefully and exultantly reply: "God . . . hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 19).

We cannot preach unless we pray. We can talk; we can say good things; we can be popular; but **Preaching the other side of Prayer.** term we cannot preach. The Apostle calls upon us to "pray without ceasing," and this exhortation has been designated an "apostolic hyberbole." I solemnly deny it. We breathe without ceasing, we love without ceasing, we believe without ceasing, why is it hyperbolical to pray with-

out ceasing? Why will we find figures of speech where we might find the very breath of heaven? Christianity is nothing if it is not hyperbolic, from a worldly and carnal point of view. Nothing in it is on a low level. Nothing is ordinary. It is the religion of the Incarnation—that hyperbole of love! We cannot always be upon our knees, but attitude is not prayer. We cannot always be uttering formal or verbal petitions, but “prayer is the upward glancing of an eye when none but God is near.” The grammarian cannot explain “pray without ceasing,” but the child-heart knows it well and knows it all. Is it hyperbole to say “we live and move and have our being in God”? To accept that being in the right spirit is to “pray without ceasing.” Prayer may be a look, a sigh, a tear, an expectation without words and beyond them. In the soul’s highest moods, when the soul is nearest heaven, we eat the Lord’s flesh and drink the Lord’s blood, without heeding the sneer and the quibble of unbelief. And so we pray. And so we read the Bible and lovingly call it the Word of God. We may be challenged to say where it calls itself the Word of God, but we should be unjust to our inspired and ardent love if

we called it by any inferior name. It has told us all we know about God and Jesus, and Sin and Pardon and Prayer, so we call it the Word of God. It tells me that I may pray. It says God hears and answers prayer. It invites me to draw nigh unto God. In its very midst there is a Throne of Grace. I must keep close company with my Lord. I must not lose sight of him for one moment. He must be so near me that we can talk in whispers. Without him I can do nothing. With him I can do all things. "Lord, abide with me, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent."

Will prayer supersede labor? Never. To labor is to pray. Prayer may rearrange labor, may give new scope and new direction to labor, may charge our aptitudes with new responsibilities, may operate in many ways, but will never sanction or prosper indolence. I will go so far as to say that a minister may be withdrawn in a large degree from literary attention to artistic sermon-making. He may have been a manufacturer of idols. Herein God may "stain the pride of his glory." He may have to think more of the truth and less of the form; more

of the Master and less of his own petty reputation. It may be the most painful of all fates to be merely a popular preacher. At this point prayer will work its silent miracles, in mellowing thought, in deepening tenderness, in enlarging charity. O brothers, let us pray without ceasing, that we may work without fainting. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." In prayer we are alone with God. We are in his treasure-house receiving the costliest of his riches. "The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people." It is as if he would give us his almightiness. "He giveth power unto the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Incomplete power despises weakness: perfect power nurses it into force. There is One who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. We must get near him in prayer. "The Lord will give strength unto his people," "for which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." I will boldly go to my Father's throne, and tell him every day what Jesus did for

me. He will not say No to Jesus, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever."

The ministry of Christ is not a "learned profession" in any monastic sense which separates it officially from the life of the common people, or in the sense of **Words and Things not Necessary to Salvation.** having a crabbed terminology of its own without which no man can hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Unhappily, the ministry of the gospel has been made scholastic. Men who enter it must know a little Latin and a little arithmetic. Latin and arithmetic no man of sense will undervalue. They may be extremely useful in any walk of life. But they have no necessary relation whatever to the ministry. To the ministry men are called directly from Heaven. The true minister is a miracle of the Holy Ghost, and on the Holy Ghost he must rely for daily inspiration. Modern ways of training ministers inexpressibly sadden me. Sometimes I feel as if they must grieve the very Spirit of God. There are many things really not necessary to the ministry. Even a final year in Germany is



not absolutely indispensable. I am not now speaking of scholars, but of ministers, preachers, pastors, who have to mingle with the common life of the people. Scholars we must have. I am now speaking from a purely pastoral point of view, and I say that pastors must not be priestlings, and certainly must not be sciolists and pedants. They must humble themselves to the acceptance of the fact that a great many beautiful things can be said even in the English language; even some fairly original things may be expressed by that instrument. It is really a very fair language, and men should take pains to spell it well before they sneer at it. I have sometimes thought of making a list of words not necessary to salvation and of hanging it up in the pulpit. The list would contain such words as :

Absolute, Relative, Hypothesis, Phenomena, Agnostic, Positivist, Synoptic, the Johannine problem, Assurbanipal, the Septuagint, Psychology, Assyriology, Orthophonic, Targum, and Hegelianism.

I have no personal prejudice against any of these words—indeed, some of them look as if they might mean a good deal—yet I do not think they are necessary to salvation. I think the Church could do very well without some of them. The sort of preaching which I describe as the Gospel-made-difficult never did me any good. Nor did I ever wish to speak to the preacher. He always seemed to be preaching out of a cloud into a cloud, and to be writhing with intellectual and verbal pain. I have avoided the portentous creature, and have sincerely wished that he would at once take a final year in Germany. The style that I like is the style of the Beatitudes, and the style of the Parables. Jesus finds my heart. Jesus feeds me. Jesus gives me rest. “The common people heard him gladly.” Dear Saviour, help me to preach in Thy way and to tell sorrowing men how they may find Thee. I am most anxious to be infinitely removed from the idea of being a member of a mere profession. If this ministry is a profession, it is a wicked fraud, with Simon Magus as its type and head. An expert I can understand, and I can assign him large functions; but the half-bred scholar who appoints himself as an oracle is a stumbling-

block, an uncertificated priestling, a pretender, and a sham. A great process of unfrocking must go on in every ministry. This will separate the true from the untrue, and invest the true with their rightful influence. The priest, regarded as the type of certain traditions and pretenses, must be got rid of. He profits by ignorance and grows rich by superstition. He sells heaven for a livelihood, and makes an investment of Calvary. The humiliation of listening to such an embodied falsehood is intense and intolerable. On the other hand, how noble a picture is that of a good minister of Jesus Christ! He is a sincere, simple-minded, unpretending, sympathetic soul; he longs to do good; he hides himself behind his Lord; for him to live is Christ. The world will always want such ministers, and the Head of the Church will never cease to supply them. They will not necessarily be literary experts; but they will be rich in that varied and well-tested experience which has tried the quality of faith in the stress and sorrow of life. The bigness of the man will explain the dignity of the minister. The ministry calls for large and generous natures. I am well aware that ignorance may pervert my meaning, and that, being des-

titute of every qualification, it may claim the mantle of inspiration. There is, however, no serious cause for alarm. Ignorance can have but a short day. Where there is no deepness of earth the process of withering cannot be long put off. Never trust a man simply because he knows nothing. It is a poor ground of trust. To blatant fluency truth owes nothing. Even where reading does not add to my wisdom, it humbles me by revealing my ignorance. To know my ignorance may be the beginning of true knowledge. So, then, I would be saved from the little-learning, which is the worst ignorance, and from the no-learning, which makes self-confidence so possible. I must go to God in loving prayer, and put myself wholly into his hands. I would bathe myself in God. O God, hear my crying, and turn Thyself toward me in great compassion.

Mr. Ruskin says that Political Economy is citizen's economy. That is definition by etymology, which is often the best definition of all. Pastoral theology is shepherdly theology. Shepherd is as hard to define as Father. We all know the meaning, yet we can never tell it all. Care is so watchful, gentleness is so patient, love is so unselfish, that we cannot eas-

ily follow their whole way and set down in plain words exactly and completely what they are doing. Love is always coming back, like Abram, to the altar which it "built at the first." Gentleness always adds one more soothing touch, and anxiety has always one more "good-night" before weariness drops asleep. The shepherd, or pastor, is not necessarily a literary expert, yet he is an expert in his own way. Mothers must not be clumsy, nor shepherds, nor nurses, nor the hand that stirs the fire in the hushed chamber of suffering. There are fine arts that have no name. The angels train us to their use. The Spirit guides the chosen craftsman and holds the hand that draws and cuts and molds the finest lines. We should do nothing for ourselves, but quietly and intently await the coming of the angel.

THE PASTOR SHOULD KEEP HIS PEOPLE AROUND  
HIS DESK

whilst composing his discourse. The audience will be imagined, not imaginary. Thus every sentence will be addressed to some known experience, and thus the hearers will know that the pastor lives in their midst. The wise pastor is under no delusion as

to the capacity and qualifications of his audience. He knows that most of his auditors are in absolute ignorance of his subject, and therefore he takes nothing for granted. Even greatness has its own fine way of being elementary. Greatness never snubs the congregation, for that would mean exasperation on the one side and loss of influence on the other. Yet greatness can stoop to the lowest and wait for the slowest. The pastor knows that most of his people are wholly unprepared for continuous and elaborate argument. They have just left a thousand worries: the child is ill; the field is bare; there is no blossom on the fig-tree; there is no herd in the stall: the mind, therefore, must be humored and lured into the subject with pious and tender tact. The minister makes a fatal mistake who supposes that his congregation is composed of intellectual and highly cultivated hearers. A few such there may be, and where the description is really true they will be the strongest supporters of any pastorate bent upon carrying forward the common life of the church. True culture is generous and patient. Probably the most prominent characteristic of any miscellaneous audience is ignorance. If a minister could question

his hearers one by one as to their knowledge of the Bible, he would be simply horrified. Ask them about the scheme of any Epistle, its characteristics, its purpose, its supreme thought, then he will know exactly on what a cultured audience he is lavishing his genius. The most discouraging feature of the case is that people are under the delusion that whatever else they may be ignorant of, they certainly do know the Bible. Not a man in a million knows anything about the Bible beyond a few of its most familiar chapters and texts. I venture to think that when the Bible is really known, in its unity, its purpose, its spirit, men will have little difficulty in calling it the Word of God. In the meantime they must be largely regarded as not knowing it. This fact creates the opportunity for a wise handling of the Word. How to be guileful without deceit? How to remove ignorance without first insulting it? The pastor must study these inquiries in the light of facts. He must often work obliquely. By explaining a word or an argument to the young, and asking grown people to be patient with him in doing so, he may now and then get a beam of light partially into heads—if heads they are—which are the very sepul-

chers of darkness. But specially and lovingly must the pastor remember that the majority of his hearers do not live in a library. They have not been trained to follow a linked argument. Why, then, should the pastor pose before them as the descendant of an Aristotle who would be the first to disown and despise him? Rather let him "serve the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears." This baptism of tears is no mean sign of power. They are the tears of a strong man. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Cor. ii. 4). "He beheld the city and wept over it" (Luke xix. 41). Man is not made up of intellect exclusively. Nor by intellect alone can man be saved.

#### THE PASTOR MUST LIVE FOR HIS CHARGE

by identifying himself with the spiritual education of his people. They are *his* people. Upon one fold he spends his care and love, as the father spends his heart upon one home. He must not be "a stranger" to his own sheep, or they will not know his voice. The standard of the true pastor is Christ. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life



for the sheep." In our own way and in our own degree we are to be what Christ was. That is our high calling! That is our cross. "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" (Eph. v. 2). Resentment is forbidden to the true pastor. He cannot act as a fellow-citizen or an equal. The pastor has often to be quiet when the natural man would be haughty and repellent. In a sense the pastor must *be* Christ. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." The apostles are pastoral examples. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." This is argument! This is the witness of the Spirit! The pastor is not yet fully ordained in whose heart there lingers one trace of social contempt. "Condescend to men of low estate." "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons." Resentment, or vanity, or self-justification has no commendation in the Bible. "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee." Acting in this spirit, the pastor will win the hearts of his people and prevail silently against

the proud doer. Violence makes but temporary success. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Aggressive and boisterous policies are for the carnal man; gentleness is the power of the pastor. "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak." Filled with this spirit,

THE PASTOR WILL NEVER DEPRECIATE HIS  
CHARGE.

Wherever his lot is cast, the pastor will conscientiously and gratefully make the most and the best of his people. He will never set himself above them in any spirit of vanity, playing the worldly "gentleman" that he may throw their manners into humiliating contrast. The people will feel his superiority without having it thrust upon them. They will smell the rose without being pierced by the thorn. In the whole course of my ministry I have never failed to observe that the pastors who appreciate their people are the pastors who do the most enduring work. Besides, if the pastor were a real gentleman, owing nothing to pretense and nothing to veneer, he would know that, however much the peo-

ple are inferior to him, they once had sense enough to elect him, and he once was glad enough to accept their favors. But such a gentleman never breaks down in his manners. He is filled with the Spirit, and is therefore appreciative, approachable, and of a tender heart. Let me lovingly warn my brethren against the too frequent practice of depreciating their people. Take Christ's view of them. "Why dost thou set at naught thy brother?" In the pulpit the minister addresses his audience as "my Christian brethren"—"my dear friends"—"my beloved hearers." He who calls his people by one name in public and by another in private brings himself under the charge of insincerity and practical falsehood. The ruder the people the larger the pastor's opportunity for refining them. If the people are too rude to be mixed with, why live upon them? Why not take up some genteeler misery? They who gathered around the Saviour were not members of the social aristocracy. The Apostle Paul worked with his own hands that he might relieve the poorer churches from the charge of his sustenance. "Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of

you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." There is a gentility that can work with its own hands when need arises. The pastor will never fail to look beyond the circumstances and fix his thought upon the man. He is a shepherd of souls, not of gold rings and soft raiment. "Not many wise men after the flesh are called." The men whose "mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage," are condemned by Jude as men who "walk after their own lusts." The pastor will have his personal friends and his elect companions, but in his pastoral capacity he will be "kindly affectioned" toward the whole church. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." The pastor has a special message to the rich as well as to the poor, and it is the more delicate message to deliver. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches." Charge them "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." In this way will the godly pastor bring into sympa-

thy and fellowship many who are divided by the worldly distinctions of title and estate.

THE PASTOR SHOULD KNOW HUMAN NATURE, for that is the truly "original language." No matter what else you know, if you do not know human nature you are not fit to teach and guide human life. Man is odd. Each man is a man by himself, a separate study, an independent puzzle. Do not be misled by mere manners. I tremble when I am introduced to "a nice man," "such a nice man"; "a quiet man," "such a quiet man." You never know what a man is until you have interfered with his vested interests, or until you have seen him under insult. Then will you know how very nice a man he is, how extremely quiet, how absolutely modest. I have had to do with "nice men" until I dread the very term.

"There's a deal o' solid kicking  
In the meekest-looking mule."

So says James Russell Lowell, and so will every pastor say who has had to do with "very nice men." Jesus Christ knew human nature, and acted with discretion that was meant to be exemplary. "Jesus

did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that he should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." He did not treat Nicodemus as he treated Herod. The pastor will need discrimination in distributing spiritual instruction and comfort. Sometimes he will be miscellaneous; sometimes personal and direct. "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Even the disobedient must not be treated as hostile. "Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Beware of false professors. "Take heed that no man deceive you." Pastors should not live for flattery. They will never be really happy until they live primarily for the favor of God. To the inquiring pastor I would say: Form your own estimate of men. Keep your counsel to yourself. Never listen to gossip; never descend to tittle-tattle. Give your people to feel that your mind is set upon great subjects and the application of such subjects to daily experience, and they will soon feel that you are disinclined to indulge in local slander or frivolous criticism. The holy man will bring unholy subjects into disrepute. If you know human nature well, you

will let some men talk themselves right out. You need not listen. But you might look at them in a way that they could hardly mistake for an encouragement.

THE PASTOR SHOULD KEEP A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

This will be his stronghold in the day of trouble. It has been the defense of good men in all time. To my junior I would say, Let no man do you such favors as would pervert your judgment or quell your courage. Borrow from none. Avoid debt as you would avoid a wolf. Never forget that a pound a week is not three shillings a day. Keep your tastes within your income. How nobly Samuel addressed the people:

“Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you”  
(1 Sam. xii. 3).

That is independence. There should be nothing shady in a pastor's relations with his people. The pastor's motto should be Straightforwardness. The

Apostle Paul had a noble record. "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. . . . In all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." An infinite shame to modern churches if the pastor should be neglected, yet the pastor's own honor need not be tarnished. "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." A horrible shame to the churches! To whom is the pastor, in many cases, least indebted for support? To the rich. Always allowing for brilliant exceptions, the rich men in a church are the robbers of pastors. They rob them in the very act of patronizing them. They tempt them into needless expense. The richest man I ever knew gave me seven and sixpence per quarter for his seat, and every time I submitted to the humiliation of dining with him my traveling expenses were in excess of that amount! Yet with what glory he covered my ministry! Surely the time will come when spiritual things will be rightly valued. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Is flesh to be balanced against thought? "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard,



and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" These are lessons for the churches. The less the pastor thinks of them the more should they be thought of by the people. Let the pastor so order his conduct in all such matters as to have a conscience void of offense. Along this line many high rewards are to be gathered. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." A solid—a sacramental feast! A banquet with the Lord himself! Hear the Apostle: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." "And herein I do exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." It was in this bank of conscience that the Apostle laid up large wealth. "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience." According to the testimony of his conscience every pastor is strong or weak. The conscience is the man. Never have an artificial conscience, or a one-sided conscience, or an oblique conscience. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

And in what will all faithful shepherdliness end? Suppose a pastor has fed the flock of God, taking

the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. What then? Will he die the death of a dog and be buried as an unclean thing? Suppose the pastor has been blameless as the steward of God and an example to the flock? Suppose he has been an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? What then? Shall he pass away as smoke and be forgotten as a wind? It is not so that the Apostle speaks of the end. His words glow with thankfulness; his spirit is immovable in confidence:

“WHEN THE CHIEF SHEPHERD SHALL APPEAR  
YE SHALL RECEIVE A CROWN OF GLORY THAT  
FADETH NOT AWAY.”

“Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

## EPILOGUE.



## IX.

### EPILOGUE.

IF the Bible had not survived so many examinations, assaults, and afflictions, one might despair of its happy issue out of present-day inquiry and so-called dissection. What we want, however, and what we must have at all costs, is the truth. In pursuing this end Christian scholars must be prayerfully and generously supported. We may have to build other churches and other colleges, because as honest men we cannot accept a livelihood by betraying a trust; yet I believe we shall account the sacrifice a joy if by making it we can get nearer to reality and fact. If the discussion turned upon some particular doctrine contained in the Bible itself, a doctrine known to be open to various interpretations, the ground would be very significantly limited. But in this case the question turns upon the genuineness

and credibility of the Bible itself, and I, for one, am sorry that our scholars and experts do not feel themselves at liberty to speak more definitely upon that vital subject. Theirs is largely a non-committal attitude upon nearly all the points of expert opinion. They offer us "a series of tentative suggestions," they refer us to "a true historical instinct," they are not able to say this or that "at present," they give "legitimate weight" to the results or possibilities of "future excavations," and they assure us that all is right as to spiritual revelation. Adam, as he has been popularly apprehended, was removed from the Bible long ago by the naturalists; there is no Adam; there never was any Adam; there never could have been any Adam;—the account of the Creation is a Poem, but who wrote it no man knows; Adam could not have written it, for there never was an Adam;—Mr. Horton ("Revelation and the Bible," p. 39) says that it would be a "childish misinterpretation" to treat the first known story in Genesis "as literal act"—the serpent never talked, the Flood never fell;—Abraham was ideal and cumulative, a noun of multitude, rather than a real and historical personality;—we are getting accustomed to hear without

special emotion that "Ruth, Daniel, and Esther rest upon a very slender historical basis";—Moses did not write the Pentateuch, David did not write the Psalms, Solomon had little or nothing to do with the Proverbs;—"the authors of the books which compose the Bible did not dream of making the claim that what they were writing was written by God, or spoken by God" ("Verbum Dei," p. 105);—yet in spite of all this we are assured that on all spiritual matters the Bible may be trusted. Surely this is imposing a severe strain upon the mind of any one but an expert. But we must not consider that. What we want to get at is fact, rise or fall what may. The front gates are fired down, the castle guns have been silenced, the moat has been crossed, the roof has been battered in, but the household hearth still remains! Does it? How long will it remain? All along the critical line orthodoxy has had to give in. Even "poor Tom Paine" is now seen to have been something of a hero and a pioneer, and in fact almost a martyr. All this may be right, or it may all be wrong; what I fear is that where criticism has so completely beaten back orthodoxy it may one day drive in the battle upon Cal-

vary itself and seize the cross as a trophy of war. It is easy to deprecate this view, and easy to pity it as sentiment, yet I cannot sufficiently ignore the antecedent facts to treat it with disregard. If ninety-nine of a hundred points have been carried, I cannot feel quite secure about the hundredth. But some of the men who have made the bulk of these concessions are Christian men? Truly. They are, too, men who do more for mankind than it lies within my inferior capacity to do. I know that I am not dealing with aliens and enemies. That is my supreme difficulty. I feel that if such men are right, I must be wrong. I was preaching in some blundering way before they were born, but they come up with all the new learning, and they take away, or permit to be taken away, Adam and Abraham, and David and Isaiah and Daniel, in the sense in which I have always cherished these illustrious names. They drive Christ out of the Messianic Psalms and prophecies. They tell me that the Bible is wrong in history, wrong in chronology, wrong in dates, wrong in sequence, and that (Horton, "Revelation and the Bible," p. 13) "as a treatise on ethics, or a *Vade Mecum* of practical conduct, the book does not pro-



fess to serve." But they assure me that the whole purpose of the book is to bring men to Christ. Whose Christ? Baur's? Strauss'? Renan's? Presently may they take away my Lord himself without telling me where they have laid him?

In substance I retain the Bible exactly as my mother gave it, for she, too, was an expert. She thought the Lord made the heavens and the earth in six days, and that he rested on the seventh day and blessed it. She told me the story of Joseph just as if it had been all true, and she told me about Abraham and Isaac and the angel seizing the uplifted knife as if it were a fact. And about the Flood she told me, and never for a moment doubted the great rain, but was quite sure that the flood was forty days upon the earth, and that the waters prevailed upon the earth, and that all the high hills that were under the whole heavens were covered. She went over all the Bible lovingly, and never said a word to me about "tentative suggestions," clay tablets, and "future excavations." And many a time after reading the Bible to me we fell on our knees, and the dear old soul talked to God as if he were a

real living being and quite close to her. Yet she knew nothing about God but what she had read in the Bible! Of course all this cuts a mean figure in the eyes of formal logic and in the view of the new learning. Yet I am going to cling to it. My reason for referring to it now is to remind the critics that there is a Bible dear to the common people—they were made by it, converted by it, comforted by it, and they live upon it, and I do not want the critics to take it away until they have something better to give than “a series of tentative suggestions” and the hope of finding some help in “future excavations.” We must not ignore the work which the Bible has done amongst the people. Experts should limit the circulation of their books amongst themselves. They should prey and feed and starve upon each other’s partial learning, and flatter each other’s critical instinct by inventing still longer polysyllables and playing the middleman to German wordmongers. I would only take away an idolater’s idol because I think I have something better to put in its place. Neither would I take away the Mother’s Adam and Moses and Abraham and Isaac and Isaiah and Daniel, and fill the ghastly vacancy with “nothing more

than a series of tentative suggestions." But what would the infidel say? I never consult the infidel upon anything. I go to the infidel for infidelity; I never go to him for faith. What, then, is to be done? Go on with the old until the new is ready. Do not let the soul shiver in nakedness whilst the new tailors are wrangling over the texture and pattern of the new clothes. What about the suggestion that the Bible is the composition and the imposture of the monks of the twelfth century? It is the most self-stultifying theory ever dreamed by insanity, if only for the reason that there is no book in the world of which the monks are so much afraid as the Bible, and no book which they have so strenuously endeavored to keep out of the hands of the people. If they invented it, they were so God-forsaken as to invent an engine for their own destruction. No layman can harbor both the Bible and the monk. Then what of the rationalistic theory which picks and chooses, and blows away the ghostly or supernatural element? A most inadequate and a most irrational theory. Rationalism offends nothing so much as reason. Every man who knows himself knows that there is a point at which reason must terminate its explanations

and solutions, and be dissatisfied by a half-illuminated universe, or rise into imagination, or find light and rest in faith. The only right which any man has to be a rationalist is the right which he has to starve himself—and has any man the right of self-starvation? I do not hesitate to say that the difference between Unitarian and orthodox conceptions should not be so faint as hardly to be distinguishable; nor should a teacher's evangelicalism depend upon an occasional sentence here and there: the distinction should be vital, glaring, palpable, eternal. I, therefore, utterly repudiate the so-called rationalistic conception of Inspiration. What, then, is my personal standpoint, my individual and peace-bringing faith? I will try to make it clear.

At the outset I feel sure that the Bible was written, edited, put together, and otherwise made into a book by somebody. The sun and moon may have made themselves, or may be due to anonymous origin, but it is certain that some man or men wrote the Bible, and some other man or men printed it, published it, and brought it within our reach. It is something to know beyond doubt that the Bible had

a personal origin. But it might have a personal origin and be a bad book. Exactly. But we know that it is not a bad book. Even some schools of rationalism admit that the book has moral merits. Certainly it is a most religious book. Its key-word, as we have seen, is GOD. That must be most clearly recognized. When creation is accounted for, where is God put? In the very first sentence. When man is accounted for, where is God put? In the very first sentence. When the Law is given, where is God put? In the very first sentence. When the prophets were called, where is God put? In the very first sentence. When Jesus began to preach, where was God put? In the very first sentence. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead, to whom was he about to ascend? To "my God and my Father." When Jesus shall end his mediation, who shall reign? "God shall be all in all." When Jesus shall come again, how will he come? "With the trump of God." From whom is the new Jerusalem to descend? "I John saw the new Jerusalem coming down from God." Before whom did the four-and-twenty elders fall down in heaven? They fell down and worshiped God that sat on the throne.

Who promised the seed of the woman? God. Who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son? God. Who shall destroy the last trace of sorrow? "God shall wipe away all tears." So rolls the thunder-music. God! God! God! I simply note the fact, and I especially note it because it is one of those facts which do not terminate in themselves. Whenever God comes, he comes with thousands of angels and chariots innumerable. When God comes, Creation came, and Providence, and Redemption. Finding as I do so much implied by the introduction of the divine Name—implied, I say, not expressed or claimed in any formal way as in a legal document—I at once, and necessarily, think of the book in vital connection with that all-including Name. In a very clear and intelligible sense, the Name is to me the book, and the book is the Name. I hardly so much as see the human names: they are the names of clerks, scribes, secretaries, or amanuenses; I am interested in them only in a very secondary and remote way. Why? Because the other Name fills all the space and becomes the focal point of all attention. It would not surprise me if the writers themselves were to tell me that they were very slow

and laborious penmen, and that often they did not know what they were writing. The prophecy may have been greater than the prophet. Jeremiah himself, not the least of the prophets, may have shrunk into a child when the heavenly charge sought to enter into his soul, and Moses never really knew how much he hesitated and stammered until God called him to service. Then the hesitancy was felt. These high elections magnify our estimate of personal infirmity. We chaffer on equal terms with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, but when the Voice out of the whirlwind thrills us, we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes. It is that Voice which I hear most distinctly in the Bible. That Voice is indeed the Bible. Without that Voice there would be no Bible. I therefore call the Bible the Word of God, and if I called it by any other name I should be as one who was busy here and there and who let the King pass by. It is more than possible to think too much about the scribes and the amanuenses, and to think too little about what is actually written. We have turned the amanuenses into authors and loaded them unjustly with responsibility. Sometimes we should pity them. Surely it was not easy to bear "the

burden" of the Lord. I thank the men through whom the message came, but I must not forget that my business is with the message itself. If I were to offer homage to the angel who brings me "the sayings of the prophecy," he would say, "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." If, when I read the wonderful words of Peter, I were to fall down at his feet and worship him, he would take me up and say, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." If I were to think only or largely of Moses and Ezra and Isaiah, this same Peter would rebuke me, saying, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And the prophets themselves would rebuke our criticism and our admiration, saying, "Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had brought you this message?" They would refer us to the true Source: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." In the New



Testament as well as the Old the reference is always to God:

“ We are laborers together with God . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. . . . These things saith the Son of God. . . . It is God which worketh in you. . . . I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God. . . . I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God; . . . in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

Thus, not “in a few scattered texts” but uniformly and passionately we are referred to God. Prophets and apostles ask no recognition, they constantly point us to God. The dominant and unchanging tone of the Bible is God. This is my reason for thinking and speaking of the Bible as the Word of God.

This gives me the right point of approach to the Bible and all its contents. All the detail I can now survey from a true elevation. So long as I mistook the telegraph messenger for the telegram itself, I was in great confusion. Who was he? Who were his

parents? What was his age? How did he come to be connected with a great electrical system? I made a puzzle of him. Was he old enough to have written a telegram? Had he and another boy concocted the telegram? After all, was the missive a telegram? If it was a telegram, why was it not sent immediately to me without the intervention of a messenger? And if a messenger had to come, why almost insult me by sending a boy—quite a child, in fact? I asked the boy if he had written the telegram, and he said No. I demanded to see the clerk who had penciled down the message, and he turned out to be little more than a boy himself, but he had sufficient sense to suggest that I had better open the envelope and read the message. When I read it, the boy and the clerk became of small consequence to me. The message was full of love. It was the message for which I had been waiting many a weary day. I could have loved even the boy who brought it to me. I had at length looked at the whole action from the right point of view, and now the shadows were dispersed by the full shining of the light. The right point of view is exactly what we want in everything. The theodolite itself may be in perfect con-

dition, yet the triangulation will be bungled if it is not set up on the right spot and at the right height. The mere setting up of the theodolite was, we are told by the surveyors, one of the most difficult operations in carrying out the trigonometrical survey of the country; sometimes a scaffold had to be built up to a great height, the surveyors say that they had sometimes to build a solid foundation for it in the middle of a bog, and sometimes it had to be carried to the very summit of a rocky mountain. So in our looking out upon wider spaces, we must not only have a well-adjusted theodolite, we must find the elevation on which the instrument must stand, even if that elevation has to be built or attained at the greatest cost. Then must follow the three specific adjustments of the instrument, any one of which being wanting or incorrect, triangulation is impossible. It seems to me that the higher critics have not always placed themselves at the right point of view in attempting to survey the almost boundless field of inspiration. They are, in some conspicuous instances, mere word-grubbers who cannot find through grammars and lexicons what can only be found by incessant and sympathetic communion with God.

Expertness may be the fruit of prayer. If I start my survey of the Bible from any other point than God, I am lost in details. The Author, not the Book, in its mechanical form, is the point to begin at. This is markedly so in the New Testament as well as in the Old. We must first know the dominating Personality of the book. That Personality is Jesus Christ. The Worker, not the works, must first be studied. It is beautiful that the New Testament begins with the genealogy of the Man. God had no genealogy, so he plunges at once into the act of revelation by creation. Jesus comes to us by every human genealogy, and all the genealogies vary even up to the point of perplexity and contradiction, yet they are reconciled in the root, forasmuch as they trace the incarnation of the Son of man. Jesus is every man's ancestor and every man's descendant. The root is in every twig, and every twig is in the root. Buddha is in the genealogy, and the woman who was a sinner, and the man who murdered his brother, and the saint almost wholly white, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed Innocence with a kiss, forasmuch as this Coming One was the Son of man. "The Son of man!" That is his genealogy in three syllables. It reaches beyond

the time-line, for he who is thus the Son of man is of necessity the Son of God, and he who is thus the Son of God is to me, and to unnumbered millions, God the Son! Thus, in surveying the New Testament, I think I place the theodolite on the true base. And thus the miracles fall into their right position and yield their mystery in response to faith. It was only when I approached the miracles from the wrong point that they staggered my inexperience. I talked of nature, and laws of nature, and the order of the universe, and continuity, until I settled into that kind of wonder the lower side of which looks toward unbelief. But all was changed when I approached the miracles from the point of long and deep communion with Christ. The miracles were but the dust of his feet. They ceased to be miracles. They were syllables in one great speech of love. In the first instance I struggled up to them through the weakness and gloom of fear: in the second I descended upon them in the strength and glory of faith. Then I understood how he came to make so little of miracles and so much of holiness, and then there shone upon me the meaning of his promise that the glory of his miracles should be eclipsed by the "greater

works" which he would do through his disciples when he worked from the height of the heavens.

From precisely the same point I have approached the aspect of Election which is known as Inspiration. What is inspiration but election operating along one special line? I do not think of individual Jews, a man here or there, as inspired, but upon Jews as a whole or a unit. They were in their corporateness called, elected, predestined, or otherwise set apart and inspired. They were a chosen people. Yet not elected apart from morals. Even the divine election makes self-conceit and self-trust impossible: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Great honor in the King's name means great obedience. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. Inspiration is committed to obedience. Why God should have chosen the Jew and not the Greek we cannot explain. Even the Greek was not left without election. Why Sinai was chosen, and the prouder heights of Jerbal passed by, no man can tell. There is only One who can carry forward the mystery into light. That One is our Father. I still,

therefore, take my stand upon that Father's sovereignty. I know that the end will be right. Theories and criticisms will come and go. Confidence and panic will alternate in the experience of the Church, but the Truth advances by night and by day. We should determine to see the good that is in each other. Literal criticism is needed, so is spiritual interpretation, so is poetic construction, so is mystic idealization. We do not want uniformity of creed; we want individual conviction sanctified by universal love. Men can surely meet on the ground of common service for Christ's sake, and find in charity the end of the commandment.

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It is important to remember that Inspiration and Revelation are not one and the same thing. Probably there cannot be Revelation without Inspiration, but there may be Inspiration without Revelation. It may be proper to define Revelation as including such truths and facts as are not discoverable by human reason, say, for example, the Personality and the attributes of the Godhead. But Inspiration may guide the mind into all truth;—into a right construc-

tion of history, into a right grouping and coloring of the facts of life, into the right use of the moral sense ; in short, into a true knowledge of all things pertaining to the whole culture of the soul. A man may be inspired to carve a statue, or paint a picture, or compose a poem, yet have no Revelation of the living and gracious God. A right conception of this difference might simplify and readjust some theological controversies.

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Am I expected, then, to receive from so small a people as the Jews so great a gift as a Book which is regarded by Christendom as the vehicle of a divine revelation? Am I in any prescriptive degree whatever to be bound by that Book? Why not go to the Greek, the Roman, or the Indian mind for my revelation? Is not the word "Jews" itself a stumbling-block? Why not collate all revelations, dreams, visions, and aspirations, and get out of them a common revelation? Surely one might naturally resent the thought of Englishmen, and men of all other nationalities, being driven to Palestine to learn from misbehaving, cruel, lying, selfish Jews who God is,



and what he is, and what he wants. Is not this to enter, if entering at all, into the sanctuary of Revelation by some ill-kept postern gate, rather than through the portals of a federal and representative Humanity? I have no difficulty as to my reply. I might argue that the Jew in this relation was more than a Jew; that from beginning to end there is not in the Bible a shadow of suggestion that the Revelation was a message to the Jew alone; and that infinitely beyond all other sacred books the Bible is pervaded and penetrated by what I may call the spirit of universality. When it begins there are no Jews; when it ends there are no Gentiles; for at the end the whole earth is as a rose in the garden of God. But I have a larger answer. I am already committed to the Jews by an infinite obligation. From the Jews I have accepted the Christ. "Salvation is of the Jews." This acceptance determines everything. I am not ashamed to receive the Writing where I received the Life.

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As to some of the biblical books being supposedly less inspired than others, such as Esther, Daniel,

Ecclesiastes, and Jonah, the case is not proved; but if proved, the issue would be of limited importance. In the matter of gradation, or degree, or other obscure variety, the construction of the Bible is most remarkable. In some cases the personality of the prophet goes for much, as Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel; in others, the prophet is lost in the prophecy. Who knows anything of Obadiah? Or Joel? Who knows precisely when Amos took up his work, except that it was two years before the earthquake? Of Amos and his junior Hosea we know some interesting particulars; but who knows anything of Micah, whose father's name is unknown, and whose birthplace owes its fame to his own prophecy? Yet Micah spake of justice and mercy and the humble walk with God. The minor prophets had their share of inspiration. Inspiration is not a mechanical term. The great and the small are the Lord's. Daniel is not necessarily uninspired because his mysterious pages are apocalyptic rather than prophetic. Jonah represents an inspired conception of life and duty, however much we may be perplexed by its central difficulty. Inspiration touches the highest and lowest grades of faculty.

There is a common inspiration, as well as an inspiration that is unique. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The Church is entitled to claim this inspiration in reading the Bible. Some parts of the Bible are personal and local, and in that degree they may have been allowed to fall into desuetude. The site of "the valley of craftsmen" is of no importance to us. We do not deny the existence of a country because some of its mountain heights are inaccessible. Many of us are compelled to do with the Bible as we do with a country: some valleys are fruitful; some rocks are barren. My pastoral advice to inquirers is founded upon the example of Christ. When he was asked great questions he referred the inquirers to the law, the commandments, the prophets. This is what his ministers must do. He never referred to the difficulties of the Old Testament, but to its gospels. The valley of Megiddon may have been blotted out: the garden of Gethsemane is the road to Forgiveness.

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The probability is that some practical notice will be taken of action that seems to go directly in the

face of the generally understood doctrinal position of various evangelical communions. What turn the action may take it is impossible to foresee. Criticism need not degenerate into persecution. Of persecution, the whole Christian Church has had more than enough. Criticism of the most searching kind we should welcome on every side, but persecution—by which I mean public discredit and forfeiture of position and maintenance, together with nameless petty annoyances—we should regard not only as hateful but as impossible. On the other hand, the higher critics must not encourage the spirit of contempt in reference even to the oldest and slowest orthodoxy. Those who stand by it deserve the love and honor of all the servants of Christ. They have not been ignoble men. God has used them to great ends, and we should magnify God in all their holy devotion and labor. Besides, we must not suppose that all the learning is on the one side and all the ignorance on the other. Some well-instructed men reject many of the conclusions of the higher criticism, and others maintain an attitude of suspicion and reserve. For my own part, I do not hesitate to regret the spirit which has been shown by some young higher critics.

Where it has not been a spirit of direct insolence, it has been a spirit of studious non-appreciation of other men—it has left them unnamed; it has had no gracious word of recognition even for the oldest of them; it has cast upon them the unworthy sneer implied by such epithets as “thoughtless,” “careless,” “unthinking,” “baseless,” and “sleek.” That spirit was surely not “drenched in prayer,” nor was it imbibed in all-night communion with the Saviour. Our elder brethren may have been mistaken, but they certainly were not “thoughtless”; they may have been blinded, but they have been neither “unthinking” nor “sleek.” The higher criticism may be put before the churches in a lowly and tender spirit; then it will be anxiously and even sympathetically considered—or it may be put otherwise, and thus grieve many who may be living and serving in the love of God. The time has not yet come when we can realize the full results of the higher criticism, when unwisely handled, in the life of the churches. At present it is somewhat of a novelty. It has not yet settled down to its work amongst the masses. When it has done so, the result will be disastrous. One higher critic read in the pulpit a portion of

Scripture, and concluded thus: "Of course you know it is not true, but it will serve to illustrate my subject." Another higher critic announced a course of week-evening addresses upon "Things in the Bible that are not true." It is not surprising that many Christians are grieved and shocked by such wanton outrage upon decency and justice. It is an infinite wrong, and I, for one, indignantly denounce it. Such men are—so at least it seems to me—in their wrong places in pulpits that are even nominally evangelical. On the other hand, there are ministers who honestly avail themselves of certain results of the higher criticism in a spirit of reserve utterly destitute of blatancy and defiance. Between two such classes of critics the most vital distinction must be drawn. Wisely handled, the higher criticism may greatly help the education of the churches; unwisely handled, it may wreck their very existence.

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The forces which are now antagonizing the Bible as it has been heretofore largely regarded, are the strongest that civilization can muster. Within the Church are the *higher critics* who have challenged

the authorships, the dates, the chronologies, and many of the earlier moralities, and have turned not a few of the ancient leaders and examples into "eponymous heroes," and some of whom have not hesitated to lower the Apostle Paul. Outside the Church are the *agnostics*, many of them men of the highest intellectual eminence, who attack the higher critics just as severely as the higher critics attack certain portions of the Bible, and "boldly challenge" them to prove the Supernatural and demonstrate the Divine. The greater havoc some of the higher critics make in the structural parts of the Bible the more vehemently they exalt the Supernatural, but their worship of the Supernatural is mocked by the agnostics as an infatuated superstition—and the agnostics have no reason to be ashamed of the intellectual force and dignity ranged on their side. Even agnostics have passed through universities, and, having done so, they smile at the idea of Revelation and Worship. They have won all along the line of the higher criticism; who can say that they will not further push their triumphs until they beat down and quench every shrine and altar and upper light? They have no reason to be disheartened. In docu-

mentary religion they have wrought great havoc; why may they not work equal havoc in spiritual religion? To smile at the suggestion is not to answer it. Once men smiled at the attacks made upon the mechanical and verbal Bible, but the attacks are no longer regarded as futile or abortive. The pedants cannot help us, but the People can—they represent the great common heart of the world, and it is to that heart the Christ has always appealed. My hope is in the common heart with all its sin and sorrow, its pain and need, its tragedy and self-despair; in that shattered, grief-stricken heart—in that mean Bethlehem—the Child-Saviour will be born age by age while time endures. The Incarnation stands between the natural and the supernatural and lays its wounded hands upon both. It is the hope of the world. It is the Infinite Salvation. But how can war be waged with success against the ever-gathering and overpowering forces of criticism, agnosticism, unbelief, and moral aversion? Modern culture, narrowly interpreted, has not greatly aided the war; nor has Science as represented by her highest English names;—there is only one hope, and that hope is the Living Christ working amongst the common



people. We must get back to Bethlehem, back to Galilee, back to Calvary. We must take Christ's standpoint in everything: even in relation to Moses and the prophets, and the Psalms, and "all the Scriptures." Literal errors have no doubt crept into manuscripts, translations, and versions; this has been frankly admitted by the most competent orthodox critics, yet I venture to think that such critics are right when they counsel a policy of caution and patience, as against a policy of Critical Young-Englandism which may occasionally disguise its cruelty under an ambiguous civility, and which may now and then be tempted to mistake its self-complacency as the newest vehicle of inspiration.

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Writing solely from a preacher's standpoint, I have no doubt that the common people do with the Bible as to its structural framework exactly what they do with its most mysterious teaching—they wisely leave it until they are better fitted to grapple with the difficulty. Whoever really enters into the spiritual church enters it by what may be called the gate of Mystery. It must not be imagined that the mechan-

ical or strictly literal part of the Bible is either the only difficulty or the greatest difficulty. Probably it is the least, and the least to be accounted of, notwithstanding the excitement of the higher critics. I have never known any one unite livingly and sympathetically with the Christian congregation on the ground that he intellectually comprehended the orthodox conception of the constitution of the Godhead. As a pastor I have thought it wise to encourage the soul to feed upon the Saviour, and to leave all difficulties, literal and metaphysical, for deferred consideration and adjustment. Nor is this an official advice adopted to meet a theological necessity. It is the approved policy of all life and progress—without it, life would come to a dead stop. I do not know how much, if anything, Christ owes to those who come to his cross along the critical, the academic, or the purely intellectual line. I will not judge, lest I wrong a rationalism in which I have no faith. May not literal errors be removed? Certainly; but do not magnify their importance. Is it not desirable to have absolutely accurate history? Certainly; but not nearly so literally important as some persons would make it out to be. The real

history may be in the central line, and not in the local placing and shading. We may need a new way of reading history. For my own part, I can read the Bible without being troubled by any consciousness of discrepancy, or any deficiency in the dating and signing of the several books. Perhaps some day a word, one little word, may explain much. I am willing to wait. I have enough for the present. I have all Eternity to work in. But ought not scholars to be encouraged to prosecute their critical studies? Certainly; and they ought to be encouraged to refrain from publication until they have something better to offer than "merely a series of tentative suggestions." It might be useful for them to issue a one-sentence report to the effect that they were steadily at work, and that, until they had definite conclusions to announce, the Church would do well to keep on reading the Bible.—I believe the Church will do this, whatever bulletins may be issued from the mines of criticism.

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Such is my personal testimony. If one ungracious word has escaped me I have done myself grievous

injustice, for I love and honor the brethren whose views I am least able to adopt. They have taken their course and I have taken mine, and in all instances the action has been taken under a solemn sense of responsibility to the adorable Head of the Church. He will judge us all, and in his mercy he will save the weakest, and spare even the bruised reed that he may breathe more music through it. If here or there a word with too keen an edge has found its way into this book, may God forgive it and destroy its unhappy influence, for Christ's men should be stronger in love than in any other quality. I am not able so to divide the Bible into human and divine, natural and supernatural, as to impair in any degree its absolute authority in doctrine and morals. To me it was not so much the writer who was inspired as the *man*—Moses or Ezra, Isaiah or Paul. The man's personality was a greater miracle than his inspiration. Consider when he wrote, what he wrote, and consider the influence which still flows from his writings, and then—account for him! Do not be so modern as to be a critic; be so ancient as to be a contemporary, then—account for him! Do not get at this man through a foreign grammar and an arti-

ficial concordance, but through sympathy, assimilation, and spiritual kinship, then—account for him! To understand the building you should commune with the architect. A word from him might fill his cathedral with light. In the Bible we have to deal with inspired manhood as certainly as with inspired literature, with character more than with ability, with holiness rather than with office. The grammarian, as such, will never understand the prophet. The lexicon will never explain the Bible. That Book of books—that Poem which absorbs all poetry—can only be understood in one way, and that is by our daily walking and conscious fellowship with God the Holy Ghost.

THE END.













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